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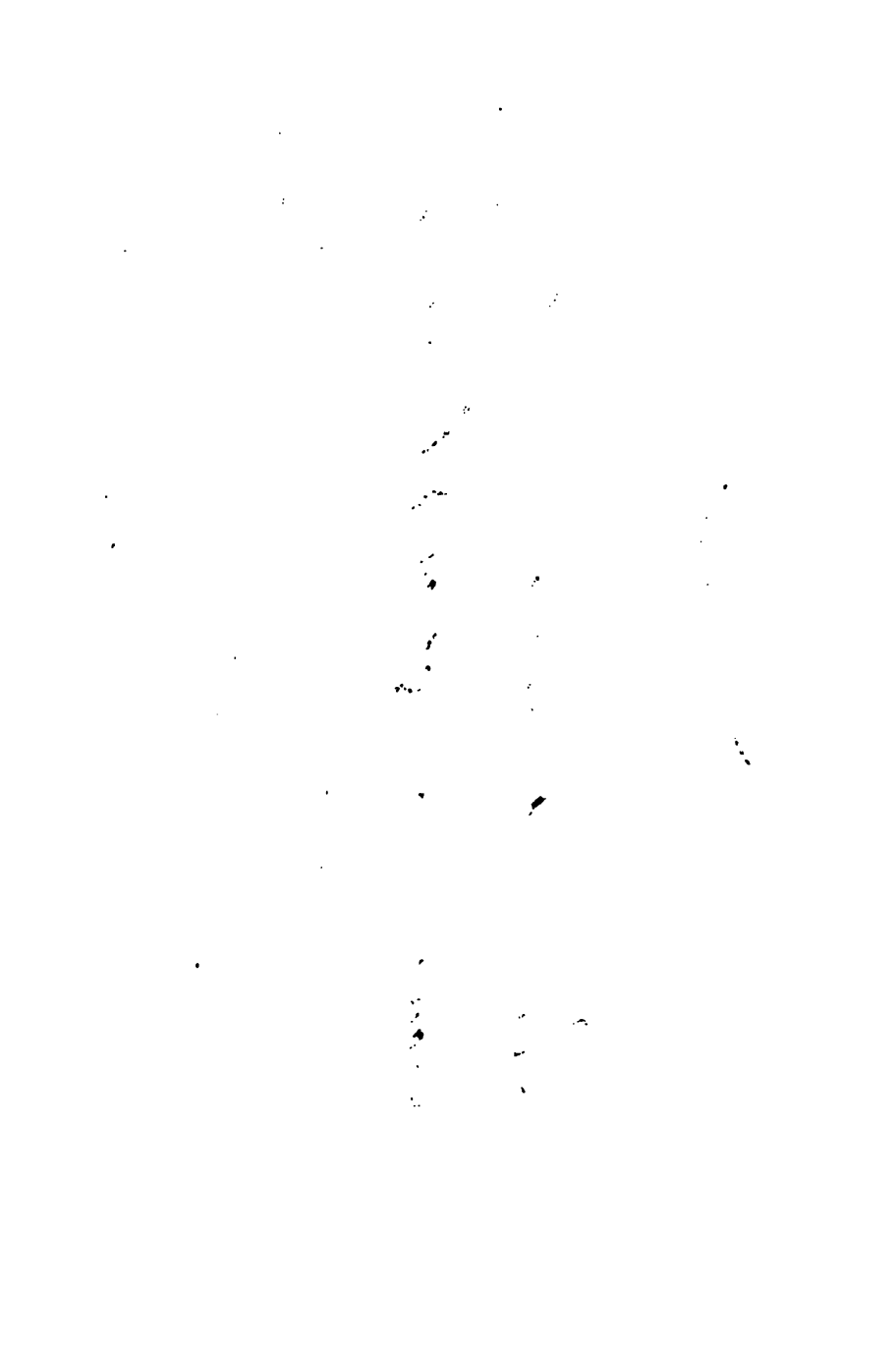
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PLAIN & PLEASANT WORDS



Plain and Pleasant Words
OR
READINGS AT MOTHERS' MEETINGS
ON
JOB AND JEREMIAH,
WITH
OTHER STORIES, AND SUNDAYS IN THE SICK-ROOM.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
'OLD PETER PIOUS,' 'DAILY LESSONS,' 'BRIGHT RAYS,' ETC.

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PLAIN AND PLEASANT WORDS.

CHAPTER I.

OLD FRIENDS MEET AND GREET.

Mrs. Jones. It surely never is Mrs. White ! Is it ? To think I should see you once more, takes both my breath and my manners ! Please excuse if I've made too free.

Mrs. White. No apology, my good woman ; no apology needful. It pleases me to find you have not all forgotten me.

Mrs. Jones. Forgotten you, Mrs. White ! How could any one forget their Sunday-school teacher ? Leastways they must have harder hearts than mine, though I know my heart is not all it should be. But how wonderful to see you about again ! I declare you don't look a day older than you did twenty years ago !

Mrs. White. Don't I ? Well, it is wonderful how the Lord has raised me up, and what trials He has brought me through ! I don't suppose I shall

ever be very strong, but to walk at all is almost like a miracle, and to be able to go in and out, and once more to attend public worship, are blessings for which to praise God. I have only lately returned from the country, to settle for a time with my son and his wife; but it seems as if all sorts of good things had sprung up in my absence. Schools and churches multiplied! And it does my heart good to hear of all the work that is going on around.

Mrs. Jones. True; a vast deal more than when you used to drop into mother's, and read the Bible to her. Grandmother was living then; but now both are dead. (Mrs. Jones shed tears.)

Mrs. White. I have experienced similar sorrow, but we can both be thankful that our loss is their gain; so we may hope to meet again. Your husband is living, I hope, and the dear little ones that I remember?

Mrs. Jones. To think, ma'am, you should bear them in mind! Thank God, they are all well, and my husband just as steady as when he used to go to your class. He often reminds me of what you said when we were married. Then our Polly, that you took such notice of, is in service, and doing well. Tommy works with his father—he was the baby when you used to come amongst us; and we have two more boys and a girl: they go to school. I have just left them there now, and I am on the way to our Mothers' Meeting.

Mrs. White. Oh, indeed! That is something new since my days : but it must be a nice help to busy mothers.

Mrs. Jones. It is as you say, Mrs. White. I only wish you would come in and see us all.

Mrs. White. I thought visitors were not allowed at such gatherings.

Mrs. Jones. But you would be a *friend*, not a visitor.

Mrs. White. You may feel so, Mrs. Jones, but the others might not, and your lady might consider me intruding.

Mrs. Jones. Never! She has talked too kindly to do anything but give you a welcome; and as to the women, why, they are mostly your old girls, who are grown up and married. There may be a few new-comers, but they have heard of you; for we often give bits of advice, and put in, 'As Mrs. White would say:' so they would not look upon you as a stranger.

Mrs. White. Well, I'll ask the lady, and consider about it. Now don't let me keep you, or you will be late. I am glad you spoke to me; for I should not have recognised you if you had not.

Mrs. Jones. There will be many on the lookout for you now, ma'am, when I give the hint, for they will be envious of me getting this talk with you. Let me help you in, ma'am, just up the step.

Mrs. White. Thank you, Mrs. Jones : I am not

quite as young as I was, and the steps are rather a difficulty. Good-bye, and remember me to all my old friends.

CHAPTER II.

MRS. WHITE'S VISIT TO THE MOTHERS' MEETING.

A GENTLE tap at the schoolroom door announced a visitor, and the lady, expecting it might be Mrs. White, came forward and gave her a cordial welcome. To be once more in the old schoolroom and meet the women, some of whom were once girls in her class, brought tears to the eyes of their former teacher. She could not speak for some minutes, and, as one and another pressed forward to shake hands, she looked up, trying to remember who was who, and which was which.

'I was Lucy Bray,' said one with a baby in her arms; 'and my husband was Joe, that you took such trouble with; and he do work so hard, and never misses church, be it ever so wet. This is Ann Scott, that hurt herself by a fall, and you got her into the Infirmary.'

'And please, ma'am, I'm Jane Hart, that gave you no end of work playing truant. Oh, I *was* bad! but all you said came to me when my

husband got hurt, and I read your tracts to him. He was Bob Swaby—you'll remember him.'

And Mrs. White proved, that whatever else she had lost in her years of trial, she had not lost her memory, for she remembered Bob, and also his wife, and all the others who spoke to her. She inquired after his lame brother, John; upon which a nice, quiet-looking woman rose, and said, 'Please, ma'am, he has a little shoe business, and I do the binding, so we get on comfortable—we didn't marry till I had saved in service.'

So much was said by one and another that the time passed too quickly for more to be added, except the closing prayer; and perhaps it was as well, for it gave Mrs. White time to collect her thoughts, and to get over the first meeting: but the lady made her promise that, if spared for the next Tuesday, and she was at her best, she would come, if fine, and tell them some of the good things the Lord had done for her in her long years of illness.

'Ah!' said she, 'He has been faithful! "Not one thing has failed" of all He promised, and if He permits me to comfort you with the comforts He gave to me, I shall rejoice.'

CHAPTER III.

MRS. WHITE'S SECOND VISIT TO THE MOTHERS'
MEETING.

'HERE I am, you see, Mrs. Seaforth,' said Mrs. White, as she met the lady on her way to the schoolroom the following week. 'Am I too soon?'

'Not much; I like to be early myself: but if you prefer to stay outside in the sunshine you shall have a chair for ten minutes or so, till the accounts are settled, and work is really begun. I am very glad you were well enough to come, and so will the mothers be. I have brought no reading this afternoon, except my Bible, for I felt you would be better than a book; you would tell of your own experience, and we may all learn to trust God, and love Him more by seeing and hearing what He has done for you.'

Mrs. Seaforth then entered the school, and the mission-woman brought out a chair for the old lady to rest in the sunshine, till business was over; then she came to fetch her in, and the room was so much fuller than the week before, and so many fresh faces greeted her, that she felt a little nervous. She asked Mrs. Seaforth to offer up a short prayer

for God's blessing, and begged her to read St. Mark, vi. 1-6; after which the lady closed the Bible, and waited for Mrs. White to begin.

In a low, trembling voice she said : ' My dear friends, I cannot give you a learned commentary on these verses which your lady has just read, but I will tell you what they have taught me. The Holy Spirit brings precious truths to our remembrance, and He has showed me wondrous things out of God's law ; so what I tell you is only what I believe He has taught me. As far as they may be blessed by Him, I pray you may remember and get good from them. Now the Saviour coming into His own country, but not able to do much good there, is something for us to note. When we begin to be in earnest about our souls we care for the souls of others, and are very anxious about those who are dearest to us. We think, If only my mother, or my aunt, or my sister, or my niece, could know what a happy life is a Christian life ; if they could only feel what a precious Saviour that is, who gave His life for us ; if my father, or my husband, or my brother, only knew how much the Lord Jesus loves us, and what a Friend He is to poor sinners, why they could not help loving Him. So we try and tell the good news of Jesus Christ coming to save sinners, and we ask our dear ones to pray to Him ; we ask them to go to His House to hear of Him ; we propose to read the Bible, that they may learn of Him ; but what happens ?

Instead of valuing the offer, and taking it kindly, they say, "So-and-so is set up! She wants me to be religious, but I shan't be talked to by her: why, she is only one of our own!" and so the blessing that would be given by God is withheld. He waits to be gracious; but if people pass by, and won't look at Him, they must go empty away. "Ask, and ye shall receive," is the promise. The Saviour did many wonderful works in other places, but He could not do them in His *own* country, for the people only mocked and ill-treated Him. Still there was some good He did, and no doubt those who got the benefit thought it was the *best* work He ever did. The Bible says, "He did no mighty works there, *save*," or except, "that He laid His hands on a few sick folk and healed them!" Oh, dear! don't you call *that* a mighty work? I'm sure if the Lord had healed me when I was ill years ago, I should have thought it a very mighty work. No doctor could cure me; I was attended by physicians who did their best. Friends recommended one thing and another. When all remedies failed, I seemed waiting for God's permission to end my illness by life or death. I felt like the sick people waiting for Jesus to pass by; and these words, "He could do no mighty work, save that He laid His hand on a few sick folk and healed them," came with power, and I thought how glad I should have been to have been one of the "few sick folk" whom He healed; and I thought

if I had been, how loudly I should have praised Him !

‘Well, my friends, I little dreamt that I should then be raised up, and be able to tell you of all His love and goodness : but here I am, and I can say, “It is of the Lord’s mercies that I am not consumed, because His compassions fail not.” If I cannot win people to believe on Him, to love Him, to worship Him, and to dedicate their health and strength to Him, I mean to go to a “few sick folk ;” and perhaps, while soothing their bodies, I may tell them of the blessed Saviour, who “forgiveth all our iniquities, and healeth all our diseases.” People may refuse help for their souls, but no one refuses help for their bodies. The Lord Jesus Christ went about doing good, let us go and do likewise.’

Mrs. Seaforth offered up a short prayer, and as they left the room many hopes were expressed that Mrs. White would come again.

CHAPTER IV.

A SUBSTITUTE FOR MRS. WHITE.

IT was a wet day, and instead of Mrs. White coming to the Mothers’ Meeting, a boy knocked at the door with a letter for Mrs. Seaforth, and

reading outside, 'With Mrs. White's kind respects,' she opened it, and read these few words :—

'Mrs. White sends a few facts for Mrs. Seaforth to make what use of she likes.' So that lady, glancing down the first page of some leaves tacked together, and thinking it would interest the mothers, she proposed to read the paper aloud. Something *true* was readily welcomed, especially when they knew it came from old Mrs. White ; so there was perfect stillness, and Mrs. Seaforth began as follows :—

ALMOST LOST IN LONDON.

*A true story as to the leading points ; to prevent identity
the locality is changed.*

The story I am going to tell,
Is founded upon fact ;
You may have heard of Camberwell,
So there we'll fix the act.

A woman who had long been ill,
Her memory had lost,
And though home duties could fulfil,
Her mind with doubts was tossed.

She could not always comfort draw
From God's most holy Book,
Though there His promises she saw,
When she had time to look.

But nothing in her mind would stay,—
She oft forgot her name ;
All she could do was just to pray,
When extra trouble came.

At last she seemed to brighten up,
Her memory returned :
A blessing now o'erflowed her cup ;
She thankful lessons learned.

One morn a letter came to say
That she must quickly go
And see a friend that very day,
In Paternoster Row.

So off she set and reached the place,—
A friend in need she found :
Thus cheered, she left with quickenèd pace,
And homewards she was bound.

But after walking on and on,
She seemed to lose her way ;
And now her memory was gone
('Twas near the close of day).

She could not think where she had been,
Or where she wished to go ;
She felt bewildered with the scene,
Her spirits hovered low.

She stopped, and to herself she said,
' I can but only pray,'
And humbly bowing down her head,
Asked, ' Show me, Lord, the way.'

Almost Lost

A gentleman came passing by,
He saw her anxious face,
And presently he met her eye,
And soon he slackened pace.

He stopped and asked, 'Whence do you come ?
Where do you want to go ?'
She answered, 'Sir, I want my home,
The way I do not know.'

'I'll guide you if you tell me where,'
He said, with accents low.
'Oh, sir,' she answered, ''tis my care
That I the name don't know.'

He tried to help her memory out
By naming streets and squares,—
Tottenham Court and thereabout,
The City thoroughfares.

To all his questions she replied
By shaking her poor head,
Until at last she faintly sighed,
And then he quickly said,—

'Oh, there ! I hear the railway bell ;
I'm sorry for your fate ;
But I am bound for Camberwell,
And I shall be too late.'

'Oh, Camberwell ! why that's the place
From whence to-day I've come.'
She followed him with cheerful face,
He took her safely home.

She then with thankfulness expressed
Her debt of gratitude ;
For ever, it shall be confessed,
He all her fears removed.

For he, who thus had helped her home,
God used to point above,
And show that wheresoe'er she'd roam
God's eye watched her with love.

So she was cheered, and meekly said,
' I've *felt* to-day God's care ;'
And when she calmly went to bed,
This was her evening prayer,—

' Lord Jesus, who hast watched o'er me,
And kept me safe from harm,
Be with me always, let me be
Defended by Thine arm.

O save my body, save my soul,
Bid every fear depart :
Lord Jesus Christ, oh, make me whole,
Renew my sinful heart.

And never let me lose my way
To Heaven, my Home above.
Lord, keep me, lest I go astray,
And watch o'er me with love.

If I should ever Thee forget,
O Lord, forget not me ;
I'll try to trust, so will not fret,
But rest in peace with Thee.'

And prayer brought down a rainbow light,
Which gladdened every cloud ;
It brightened her poor feeble sight,
And made her say aloud,—

Thank God, who is my guiding Star,
To cheer this world's dark night,
It shows me blessings greater far
Than human earthly light.

It makes me look beyond the grave,
To Heaven's Home Mansions fair ;
It shows me Jesus, strong to save,
And guides me safely there.

So from myself I turn away
To Christ, who is my Light,
And when I fear, I'll look and pray
To Him, who makes all bright.

He is a Friend who'll ne'er forsake,
On Him I will depend,
I know He'll for me undertake,
And daily succour send.

Thus every fear I'll cast away,
I'll lean upon His Might,
And when I cannot see my way,
I'll still believe all's right.'

Let's do the same, and trust in God,
He'll be our Guard and Guide ;
And when we feel His chastening rod,
We're sure He's by our side.

Faith oft is weak, and sight too dim,
To see the way before,
But we may safely lean on Him,
He'll take us to the shore.

And though by tempests we are tossed,
The Saviour is at hand ;
Not one, though feeble, can be lost,
He brings each safe to land.

Then they will own that they were kept
By an Almighty care,
Which never slumbered, never slept,
But answered every prayer.

CHAPTER V.

MRS. WHITE'S TALK ABOUT THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

'MRS. SEAFORTH was ill, and would Mrs. White be able to talk to the women at the Mothers' Meeting?' was a request made by the Bible-woman who called, adding, 'Mrs. Seaforth would be so much obliged.'

It was rather a cold day, but Mrs. White wrapped up, and told the mothers that she thought the walk had done her good, for she felt warmer than she had done all the morning. She offered up a short prayer, and then she read Psalm xxiii. ;

after which she said,—‘No doubt you all know those beautiful comforting words. They are the first words I ever read out of the Bible, and the first I learnt. They are words that have comforted me all my life, and fifty years have not worn away their beauty and their freshness; for only last Sunday I heard a sermon from them, and I seemed to find something new in them, though it is the experience of their comfort during many years of pain and sorrow that has urged me to read them to you. I want to talk to you of the Lord’s protecting care. You know what frightened, silly animals sheep are. They are not half so sensible as a dog or a cat. They never know their way back if they go astray, and they never find right pasture for themselves. They can neither defend themselves from danger, nor recover themselves if they fall into danger; so they need everything to be provided for them, and every care to be taken of them. They are a picture of ourselves. We go astray from what is right, we do not know what is good for us, we need a Shepherd to provide and care for us; happy are those who can say, “The Lord is my Shepherd;” because such can add, “I shall not want.” The sheep may fancy it wants flowers and fruits, and other pasture; but the shepherd will take care that it has all that is good for it. He even takes it to a shady place, to make it lie down and rest. Just so the Good Shepherd provides resting-times and resting-places

for His people. When I was ill, it was sweet to feel that it was my Saviour, **the** Good Shepherd, that was making me lie down, and be still. It is He, my dear friends, who gives **you** this rest at your weekly meeting; be thankful for it, and make much of it. He leads by the right way, though sometimes it is a rough way, and a trying way: but it is to give us refreshment; and as we stop to drink the still waters, we find ourselves revived. The Holy Spirit is the Living Water that God gives to cheer, and comfort, and help. Those who follow the Good Shepherd are helped to walk on their way by the Holy Spirit. He it is, who comforts and restores us when we seem ready to faint, and inclined to give up following the Good Shepherd. All these blessings are ours for Jesus Christ's sake. Yes, He leadeth us "in paths of righteousness, for His Name's sake." Not because we are good, for the best of us are like poor sheep going astray, but because He loves us, and does not want to lose *one* from His flock. So let us follow Him, and fear no evil. You know how timid sheep are: if only a baby-child runs towards them, they flee, as if a wolf were going to devour them. And how fearful are we! We are always fancying trouble is near. If bread is cheap, we are afraid wages will be low; and if work is regular, we think coals will be dear, and frost will be coming; forgetting that the Good Shepherd will provide, and will not let us want if we follow Him. In our darkest days,

yea, when sorrow and death are at hand, if we can say to the Lord our Shepherd, "*Thou art with me,*" then, wherever we are, or whatever we do, we may add, "I will fear no evil; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."

'Now the Shepherd's rod is not like our rod. We have a rod to punish. The sight of the rod is often enough to frighten a naughty child: how then could David say, "Thy rod and Thy staff *they* comfort me?" David was a shepherd; and a shepherd in his country, and in all Eastern countries, uses the rod to *count* the sheep when he collects them into his fold. He holds it over each, one by one; and if there is a goat he sends it back, or a sheep that does not belong to him, he does not let it pass *under the rod*. So the rod comforts, because it shows that the Shepherd has passed us on under His own protection; and it is also a comfort, because the rod is a sign of the ruling power of the Shepherd; and if we are under the rod of the Good Shepherd, we know He will manage all for us. He will put forth His staff to help us, and goodness and mercy will follow us on earth, till we get beyond sheepfolds here below, and reach our Father's House above, where there is joy, and peace, and comfort for ever and ever.

'Now, dear friends, you see the comfort of the twenty-third Psalm, and what a blessing it is to have the Lord for our Shepherd. Are you one of His flock? I will tell you another time how they

are known; but to-day we have talked long enough, and I think you will like some lines which I once wrote on the Good Shepherd; so they shall close our reading this afternoon.'

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

Jesus said, 'I am the Good Shepherd.' 'All we like sheep have gone astray . . . but the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.' (John, x. Isa. xl. 11; liii. Psa. xxiii. cxxi.)

Each little lamb in Jesu's fold,
Each feeble sheep, foot-sore or old,
Is kept and watched both night and day,
And searched for, if it goes astray.

The Shepherd never can o'erlook
The help each needs, and points His crook
To aid His flock, first here, then there,
If one gets tangled in a snare.

In wintry days, when winds sweep by,
He keeps o'er all His watchful eye;
When summer suns are bright and warm
He watches, lest there come a storm.

And though He cares for one and all,
Watches lest evil should befall,
The *tender* lambs, the *feeble* sheep,
Are those He *seems* the *most* to keep.

The Good Shepherd.

In fancy once I saw the sheep,
And all the lambs He loved to keep,
With the Good Shepherd on His way,
Never slumbering night or day.

The little lambs knew well His voice,
And He knew each, and did rejoice
When they ran on, then turned to greet,
Or fondled round their Shepherd's feet.

Sometimes they gambolled in their play,
Lost sight of Him and went astray ;
But He would wait, and stand, and call,
Then haste to help when one would fall.

And lifting up the wandering lamb,
And calling loudly to its dam,
Would bring it safely to the fold,
That little one, so young and bold.

Then often too would lag behind
An older sheep, as if to find
Herbage, which it had fancied more
Than the Good Shepherd's boundless store.

And then, how oft there proved a snare,
Just set to catch the timid hare,
Which caught the sheep and made it bleat !
This brought the Shepherd's willing feet.

And oh, how gently did He say,
' My silly sheep, what made you stray ?'
Then lifting it, He soothed its pain,
And set it by His side again.

The Good Shepherd.

21

But it could hardly get along,
So the Good Shepherd sang a song,
And sat down by His weary sheep,
And lulled it till it fell asleep.

It rested there for many a day,
The Shepherd soothing with His lay ;
Then lifting its poor weary head,
He wept to see how it had bled,

‘ My poor dear sheep,’ He said and sighed,
‘ I’m grieved to think how much you’re tried !
I wish you’d never strayed from me,
But now I’ll tend you lovingly.’

These words were precious to the sheep,
Though bitterly they made it weep ;
For first they sent a painful dart,
Then healed the sheep’s sad wounded heart.

It dared not think the Shepherd loved
One that had strayed far in the wood ;
It felt too weak to say ‘ forgive,’
All it could do was just to live.

But He who watched it day and night,
Who kept it ever in His sight,
Who guarded it from harm and fear,
Showed plainly how to Him ’twas dear.

This rescued sheep which He had saved,
This wandering one that was depraved,
He loved it more than He could tell,
And it loved Him, He knew quite well.

The Good Shepherd.

But this it did not dare to own ;
It did not think a bleat or moan
Expressed how much it longed to say,
'I'm grieved I ever went astray.'

Oft still it felt a painful smart,
Or feared the Shepherd would depart ;
But there He sat to give relief,
For every bleat was sign of grief.

And while His flock He tended still,
He nursed this wounded sheep with skill ;
He seemed as if He loved it so,
He could not too much pains bestow.

One day the Shepherd took His crook,
And led the sheep towards a brook ;
It kept so closely by His side,
As if to say—'Be Thou my guide.'

The Shepherd took the sheep quite near
To the still water fresh and clear,
And there it drank, then raised its head,
While this is what I guessed it said :

'Oh, do, dear Shepherd, keep Thy sheep,
Oh, never slumber, never sleep ;
Then I'll believe Thou wilt forgive,
And make Thy wounded wanderer live.'

The Shepherd quickly made reply :
'I'm thankful that you did not die ;
'Tis long since I your faults forgave,
I'm glad that I was near to save.

Believe My love will never fail,
'Tis from above and must prevail ;
So now rejoice with Me, and feel
Thankful that I your wounds could heal.'

I then awoke from fancy's dream ;
From the last words I caught a gleam
Of love, which ever will endure—
Balm for the wounded sinner's cure.

No untrue picture I had seen
Of love that never could have been,
But love like that of Christ my Lord,
Who saves me of His own accord.

'Loved with an everlasting love,'
Are words which drew my heart above ;
They found an answering echo there,
And they have kept me from despair.

For well I know I should not love,
Or care to seek my God above,
If God's own Spirit had not found
A place to shed Christ's love around.

And though my sight is very dim,
Though earthly mists oft hide from Him ;
Yet while I want Him in my heart
I know He's there, and won't depart.

He gave Himself to save my soul,
So He will all for good control,
And keep me e'en beyond the grave ;
For He who died now lives to save.

It is His own great love to me
Which makes me long His love to see ;
So I will never doubt the care
Which keeps and guards my every hair.

Lord, keep me safe ; don't lose Thy hold,
Till I am housed safe in the fold ;
And then, dear Saviour, let me stand,
Clothed in Thy robe, at God's right Hand.

Oh, then how loudly will I sing
Praise to my Shepherd, Saviour, King,
Who drew me by the cords of love
Into His heavenly Fold above !

Where I shall learn the love that saved
Was more, far more, than I had craved ;
For glories were awaiting me,
Beyond what finite powers can see.

'Tis not enough from Satan's chain,
From sin and sorrow, and from pain,
That Jesus Christ will set me free,
And give me joy and liberty ;

But I shall find an endless store
Of pleasures, which for evermore
Are all secured by Jesu's love,
For those whose treasure is above.

Then 'tis for *me* ; *my* heart is *there*,
Though oft its load of sin and care
Quite weighs it down, that it can't rise
To view its treasure in the skies.

But as I know it is secure,
And kept by love which will endure ;
I'll only ask, like the poor sheep,
That God o'er me a watch will keep.

CHAPTER VI.

MRS. WHITE'S TALK ABOUT THE SHEEP.

' WELL, my good women, you see I am come to finish last week's subject ! I told you then about the Shepherd ; but that implied sheep, for there would be no use of a shepherd, unless there were sheep. I told you the Lord Jesus Christ, our blessed Saviour, is the Shepherd of His sheep ; now I am going to talk to you about His flock. You know owners of sheep mark those that belong to them in this country. In Eastern countries shepherds give names to their sheep, just as we do to dogs, and directly the sheep hear the shepherd call, they go to him. The shepherd knows every one, and can tell one from another, though we might think they all looked alike.

' Now, we poor sinners are the Saviour's flock. The Bible says, "All we like sheep have gone astray," and in church we acknowledge, that "we have erred and strayed from God's ways like lost sheep." Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd, who

came into this world, "to seek and to save that which was lost." Yes, He came looking after you and me. He wants us to believe that He died for our sins. He was punished instead of us, and He asks us to follow Him. The sheep of Christ are all known by their *feet* and by their *ears*. When the Lord calls, the feet run to follow ; so their *feet* show they are His sheep who attend. When He speaks, they listen ; they hear His voice and obey : so *that* shows their *ears* are attentive, and attention is the mark on the ears of Christ's sheep. They take heed to all the words spoken by the Good Shepherd. Listen to what St. John says in the New Testament,—“My sheep hear My voice ; I know them, and they follow Me.” Yes, they go where the Good Shepherd leads the way, along ways of holiness, and in paths of peace. His ways are all ways of pleasantness. No drunken broils, or sulky tempers, or envy, hatred, or malice, are found in His steps. If people want such company, they must turn away from the Good Shepherd's path.

“Ah !” perhaps you will say, “that is where I once went ; but the Good Shepherd called me, and I don't want to stray any more.” That is right : “if sinners enticé, consent thou not.” In Palestine, the sheep are quite frightened when a stranger calls. A gentleman once tried to imitate the shepherd's voice, and called to the sheep ; but instead of one running to him, they all looked up in fear, and

collected together round their shepherd. Now, that is just what we must do, if people call to us to break the Sabbath, or do any wicked thing; we must flee from them, and go to Jesus in prayer, and ask Him to keep us out of temptation, and deliver us from evil. Then, there is this precious promise for all Christ's flock; for the weak and the strong, the young and the old,—“My sheep shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand:” so they are safe now and for ever. I knew a sick person who called that *her* text; she had strayed from the fold, but the Good Shepherd brought her back through the sorrowful path of affliction, and when she was fearful lest He should lose sight of her and leave her, *that* promise kept her from despair,—“My sheep shall never perish.”

‘I will read you the lines I wrote about her, and I hope we shall each listen for the Shepherd's voice, and keep close to Him.’

A TRUE ACCOUNT OF A SHEEP KEPT BY THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

‘Give me a text, dear friend, I pray;’
So asked a lady on her way
To travel, hoping health to find,
For she was much distressed in mind.

A Sheep kept by

I'd run the race, but fear to win,
I feel so sadly full of sin :
Just tell me something for my aid,
When my poor heart is sore afraid.'

She paused, and wished her friend would speak ;
But she was very ill and weak,
And hardly had the strength to say
What most she wanted on that day.

At last she whispered words of peace,
She prayed, ' O Lord, our faith increase ;'
Then, grasping firm God's Holy Book,
She said, with earnest upward look,—

' Think what is written in St. John !
Those are the words to rest upon ;
Not one will perish of the sheep,
For Jesus Christ His flock doth keep.'

' Oh, yes, dear friend, but can I be
One whom the Saviour has set free ?
I feel so bound with sin and strife,
I cannot think this leads to life.'

Reply was made : ' Seed in the ground
First dies, but will again be found,
Living, and multiplied the more
Than ever when it lived before.

We die to sin that we may rise,
And live again beyond the skies ;
Your turning from your sin now proves
That you are one whom Jesus loves.'

'I wish I thought it, but I doubt
So many truths you talk about ;
I know He is *your* Shepherd true,
But I am not a sheep like you.'

'The Shepherd has a wide, large fold,
Where lambs and sheep are, young and old ;
Not two alike, except in this,
His voice they hear and know 'tis His.

You've often heard the Shepherd speak,
Though now your faith is very weak ;
And He will often call to you :
So listen, dear, you'll find Him true.'

'Inded, I'll listen ; may His voice,
Soon make my trembling heart rejoice !
I'll try to hope I am His sheep,
That Jesus will my soul now keep.'

* * * *

The friends were parted, never more
To meet upon this earthly shore :
But tidings came from far away,
One sad and dreary winter's day.

A message came to cheer the one,
'Twas, 'Tell my friend the work is done ;
The Shepherd all His flock doth keep,
And I am safe, His sin-sick sheep.'

Though bruised and worn, it was not lost,
For well the Saviour knew its cost ;
His blood had bought that poor old sheep,
And to the end did safely keep.

A kept Sheep.

'Go tell my friend I enter in,
Saved both from sorrow and from sin ;
For Jesus is the Shepherd true,
He is the Way to enter through.

And thus I pass the heavenly door,
For He has entered in before ;
He draws me on, He speaks the word,
And I am ever with the Lord.'

The friend could only make reply,
'Thank God, who taught her how to die !
I knew He would that very day
When she was asking me the way.

The anxious fear lest she should fall,
Lest any evil should befall,
Lest she should not be of the fold,
Quite plainly all the secret told.

For no one cares about the Lord
Who has not thought upon His Word ;
But all who *do* are marked His sheep—
Each one of such the Lord will keep.

And lest they e'er should fall away,
He follows when they go astray,
And brings them back with staff and rod :
Such is the love of Christ our God.'

So let us trust, and fear no ill,
Quite sure His word He will fulfil,
That none will perish in the end,
Who have the Saviour for their Friend.

CHAPTER VII.

TALK ABOUT JOB.

‘PLEASE, Mrs. White, the doctor has ordered Mrs. Seaforth to the sea-side, and she bid me ask if you would be so good to look in at the Mothers’ Meeting and help me.’ The Bible-woman paused after delivering this request. ‘Do please, ma’am, if you can ; our poor dear lady will go away easy if you promise to help me,’ added Widow Grey.

‘Gladly will I do what I can to help your lady, and you also, Mrs. Grey ; but I hardly know what subject to take that would interest and profit the women. Can you give me a hint ?’

‘Well, ma’am, if you would give us a bit of Job, I’m sure we should all be glad. I was calling on one of the mothers yesterday, and she said, no doubt you had read a deal about Job in your illness ; so you had got his comfort, and she wished some day you would talk about him.’

‘Very well, Mrs. Grey ; Job shall be our next subject.’

And when Mrs. White greeted the women on the following Tuesday, the Bible-woman had prepared the mothers ; so there were one or two strangers, who were in sore trouble, and never could be per-

suaded to go outside their own door: but when Mrs. Grey told them that there was going to be a few words about Job, they ventured to creep in; and though they would not work, they sat and listened while Mrs. White offered up a prayer, and read the first chapter of Job: then she spoke as follows:—

‘My dear friends, whenever we are in any trouble we don’t think of the healthy and the happy, but we think of the sick and the sorrowful. Though Job lived before David and Abraham, yet we call him to mind when we are in trouble, because we know he had trouble; and we have all heard that God helped him to bear it, so we feel we should like to know more about him. Job was at one time a very rich man; he had more property than you and I, and all of us put together.

“He had seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household;” so, the Bible adds, “this man was the greatest of all the men of the East.” He had also a wife, and a family of sons and daughters.

“Well,” you will say, “if Job was so well off, and had all so comfortable, there is no wonder he was contented and thankful. I could be patient if I had as much as Job, but I have hardly enough to keep body and soul together: as to cattle and useful beasts, I never kept anything but a cat, and I am sure she keeps herself more than I keep her.” Such is what one or two may feel, if not all of you,

my friends ; for it is what I have thought myself ; so I have been thankful again and again that God tried Job's character, to show us what it really was. God knows all our hearts, but we hardly know ourselves, and others only judge of us by our actions : so God puts us into trials which bring forward our faith, or patience, or good temper, or hope, or perseverance, and then we say, "Who would have thought such a one could have borne up so ?" The fact was, God was supporting the poor sorrower ; she had prayed to Him, and, when she found the Lord's strength perfected in weakness, she knew He was working in her to will and to do ; and when neighbours saw that she did not sink under her trial, they said her religion is real, it is of some use. God brought it more to the light.

'*That* was one reason why Job was tried. The wicked spirit goes about to lead people astray. He had observed Job, and saw that, in spite of his prosperity, he was a good man, "one who feared God and eschewed evil." His wealth did not lead him to forget the Giver of his blessings, but night and morning he dedicated himself and his family to God, and prayed for them and for himself, offering sacrifices in their behalf, for pardon of sins and short-comings. Riches, health, and prosperity are too apt to make people forget God, but, where they are used *for* God, they bring increased happiness. Satan was vexed that Job was not led away from godliness by his possessions ; but he

thought, as you and I might, that it was easy to be good when there was no hardship to encounter. God knew that Job's religion was not mere outside show; so He permitted trial to come upon him. Foreign enemies came and captured all his cattle; they took away his camels, and oxen, and sheep: so rich Job lost all his property, and was a poor man. Then a stormy wind blew down his house, burying his sons and daughters in the ruins; so Job was not only poor, but he was childless! Now what was his conduct under these sad circumstances? He looked up. We should have looked down, and cried at our losses. But Job looked up to Him, who had first given him all, and said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." The Bible adds, "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly."

'Oh, my friends, what an example is Job for us, to bless God even for losses and crosses! What a comfort to know it is He who takes, as well as gives, and it is by believing that He does all things right, and can make even trials work for good, that we try to hope and submit, praying, "Lord, I believe" Thou wilt help me; "help, Lord, my unbelief." You will perhaps say, "Job had his health left; he could work for his living, and go about to divert his thoughts, and get sympathy from his friends. He would not have been patient if he had been laid by with sickness, and been without friends. He had his wife to comfort him still." You are right, that

sickness is one of the hardest trials to bear, especially when people have no friends, and no earthly comforts. Job was to learn this by bitter experience, and if you would like to know how he stood these severe trials of pain, and unkindness, and misunderstandings, and reproaches, come next Tuesday, and, if all be well, I will tell you more about poor Job; now, there is only time to read a hymn, and close with prayer.'

CHAPTER VIII.

MORE ABOUT JOB.

MRS. WHITE was punctual to her time, and having opened the Mothers' Meeting with prayer, and read the second chapter of Job, she spoke as follows:—

'My dear friends, we talked last week about Job's losses; now we have read of still greater trials, for to be afflicted in body is worse than losing property. Poor Job was smitten by boils, which must have been painful to bear, and dreadful to see; they covered his whole body, and he was so altered that his friends hardly knew him. His wife even felt this trial, and advised him to "curse God." Perhaps she had been ready to join his religious worship when all prospered, but losing

property and children, then seeing her husband suffer, she gave up her acknowledgment of God's love and providential care. She was like a fair-weather sailor, who boasts how well he can sail, but let a storm come, and he is too much frightened to steer the vessel, or man the sails; all he desires is, to be put on dry land. There are many fair-weather Christians in the world; they can talk about God when all is smooth, but they cannot trust God when all is rough. Trials are too much for their religion. Like the frightened sailor, who will give up his sea-voyage if the crew will land him—yes, he will give up his profession altogether, and become a land-lubber as he calls it, anything to escape from the storm—so many a nominal Christian, as did Job's wife, will curse God when trouble comes, thinking that religion is the cause of their sorrow, and that they shall do better to live as if there were no God. But just as the sailor finds there are dangers on the land, as well as on the sea, so people find there are trials for the ungodly, as well as the godly.

'There is one great difference, however: the trials of the righteous are loving corrections from their heavenly Father, to do them good, and to bring out faith, and patience, and experience, and hope, all which will meet with "an exceeding weight of glory" in reward hereafter; while the trials of the wicked are God's judgments, often in mercy to bring them to repentance, though sometimes He

cuts them off in displeasure at their neglect of warning, and as an example to others. Every awful visitation and dreadful calamity is a voice saying, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

'Job's afflictions were not judgments in anger, they were chastisements in mercy, "loving corrections to make him great," as the Psalmist calls the Lord's dealings to him; and his wife was very wrong in stirring him up to evil, instead of soothing his pains by kindness. When a woman cannot be clever, she need not be cross. Though Job's wife could not cure her husband, she ought not to have been put out of temper. It is hard for a woman to be ill, but it is much harder for a man; so while a man's duty is to bear, a wife's duty is to forbear. Ah! *she* has had many an ache and pain, she has been early schooled to hide her suffering, and she can feel what it is to be hardly able to endure, so she sometimes wonders at men giving in so easily; but if she is a good wife she will be ready with kind words, if she has nothing else to offer. She will pray for her husband, if she cannot cure him; and she will never follow the example of Job's wife, and say "Curse God."

'Listen to Job's answer: "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" The Bible adds, "In all this did not Job sin with his lips." The best of us deserve no

good, therefore God is very gracious in giving good as well as evil, sun as well as snow, warm weather as well as cold weather, health as well as sickness, blessings as well as trials; and He promises to make "*all* things to work together for good to them that love Him." Therefore, like Job, let us acknowledge God's hand over us, and, if tempted to rebel against the Almighty, let us remember Job, and pray with David, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips."

'Now, perhaps we had better not talk much more about Job to-day. He had a long illness, wearisome days and nights were appointed him. By day he could hardly bear his pain, and yet at night he could not sleep; so he wished for the morning's dawn to end his tossings on his bed. If he *did* drop asleep, he was so scared with dreams that he was thankful to be awake; and thus days, weeks, and months passed slowly by, when he was a misery to himself, and would have been glad to die, though he said, "All the appointed time will I wait, till my change come." He knew his times were in God's hands, and that he would not be allowed to suffer a day longer than was for his good, and for God's glory. Let us remember that *our* times are in God's loving hands, so let us trust in Him and not be afraid.

'Next week, if all be well, I will tell you about Job's friends. Think of what you have heard con-

cerning his losses and his crosses, his sickness and his wife, and be prepared for what follows. I will just read these few lines, and then we will close with prayer :—

“ Art thou sad and lonely ?
Dost thou need a Friend,
Kind and sympathising,
Able to defend ?

Jesus now is waiting,
Such a Friend to be ;
Waiting to be gracious—
Gracious unto thee.

Art thou weak and weary,
Fainting 'neath thy load ?
Lean upon the bosom
Of thy Saviour God.”’

CHAPTER IX.

JOB AND HIS FRIENDS.

‘ THE rain hindered me, and I am sorry to be late. Your friend Mrs. Grey has offered up a prayer for God’s blessing, so now we will begin at once. I heard your “Amen” just as I was on the doorstep. I have been lifting up my heart to God as I came along, and I believe He will be present with us.’

Mrs. White then opened her Bible and read Job, v. 6-22.

'I promised to tell you of Job's comforters. There were three of his old special friends who came to see him, for when they heard of all his troubles, "they made an appointment together to mourn with him, and to comfort him." Seeing him afar off, they lifted up their voices and wept. They did not know Job, he was so changed, and so sadly disfigured; they were too much grieved to speak, so they just sat by him in silence. It is often the best comfort just to wait quietly, and weep with those who weep; for sorrow is sometimes too great to be comforted with human words. Job's friends stayed with him a week, and that showed their kindness, though they did not talk; and it would have been better for Job if they had left without speaking, unless they had spoken differently. It is true that they were good words they said, but they were not applicable to Job. They were right words in a wrong place. We can imagine after a week's suffering, while his friends were there, how excusable it was that Job complained of his pain, and, with irritated nerves, wished to die, cursing the day when he was born; but not cursing his God. Of course it was wrong to say what he did, but his friends ought to have made allowance for his wakeful nights and constant pain; instead of which, they all set upon him to blame him.

‘Eliphaz spoke first, and though he was more gentle than the others, yet he said some very bitter things for a good man to hear. Eliphaz spoke as if it were no trial to be afflicted, and seemed as if he had expected Job to bear any amount of pain and privation. Instead of sympathising with him, he expressed his surprise at his not bearing up better. He reminded him how often he had comforted others, and wondered he had no comfort now in God’s consolations. He told him that God loves those He chastens, and no one should despise God’s fatherly corrections. All this was very true, and Job had not despised them, nor rebelled against them ; but, after days and nights of patient bearing, he did fret, and happy would it have been, if Eliphaz had been considerate and tender. If *he* had been tossing about in bed with painful boils, he would not have been so unruffled himself, as, with good health, he sat by poor Job, adding to his trials. We ought not to attempt to speak to others, without considering how we ourselves should be, if tempted as they are, and better be silent, than speak as did Job’s friends.

‘The remarks of Eliphaz, only made Job feel his trial all the more ; he said he “would not live away,” and he knew there was “an appointed time” for his death, and he should be glad when it came. He spoke of all his sorrows by day and night, and he felt that one so afflicted ought to have pity shown him : but, turning from man to God, he prayed for

pardon ; his conscience told him he had done wrong, and he said, "I have sinned; what shall I do unto Thee, O Thou Preserver of men?" Then, feeling that he was a "burden" to himself, he prayed that God would forgive him at once, and let him die; which so shocked his friends that Bildad spoke, and told him that God had a right to do what He pleased, and if his children had been wicked God was justified in cutting them off; and he reminded Job that God never casts off a perfect man, and that if he has done wrong and will turn, God will receive him: but he tells him that "the hypocrite's hope shall perish." Poor Job was anything but a hypocrite. When Bildad spoke of God's superiority to man, and having a right to do as He pleased, Job said he knew God was very great, ruling the stars and the storms. He could kill, and make alive; He could do whatever He pleased; and Job owned that he was not worthy to look up to One so holy, so powerful, for he felt what a sinner he was, and he prayed to the Lord, "Do not condemn me!" He entreated his God to let him alone, saying, "If I be wicked, woe unto me! and if I be righteous, yet will I not lift up my head. I am full of confusion; therefore see Thou mine affliction."

'We do not wonder at poor Job feeling confused with the sorry comfort of his friends, and his appeal, "See mine affliction," would have been enough to make most people say, "Poor fellow! it will be



kinder to leave him ; he has had no sleep, and all this talk has tired and confused his head : he will be better to rest and be alone." But Zophar seemed to think, as the others had spoken, he would not leave without a few words, and after telling Job that he had said he was "clean and pure," he reminds him that God can see into the heart, and though Job seemed to think he knew God, yet it was impossible for poor sinners to "search and find out the Almighty." He advised him, if iniquity was in his heart, to put it far from him, and give up wickedness, and then he would "forget his misery;" all his sorrow would cease, and he would again be comfortable and happy. Just as if Job's sins had caused his sorrows !

'Many people are like Zophar, they think afflictions must be a sign of special sins. Like the people in the New Testament who asked concerning the blind man, "Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" and our Saviour answered, "Neither hath this man sinned nor his parents, but that the works of the Lord should be manifest." Some sicknesses and diseases are visited from generation to generation upon sins committed ; but affliction, like that of the blind man mentioned by St. John, and the sufferings of Job, were not of that kind. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth;" and, like the precious stones which the jeweller cuts and polishes, so those whom God *means* to put in His crown, He takes

special pains with, in cutting, in rubbing, and removing every blemish.

‘Job felt that his friends did not understand him ; at one time they charged him with hypocrisy and wickedness, telling him that God was sure to visit such conduct with judgment, and that sin deserved punishment. Job knew this as well as they did, and so far he agreed with them ; but he declared that he was not a hypocrite, and that he had tried to serve God faithfully. Then his friends charged him with being self-righteous, so no wonder that he turned from man to God. He says, “I would speak to the Almighty ;” for he tells his visitors that *they* are “forgers of lies,” and “physicians of no value.” He declares his faith in God, saying, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him. . . He also shall be my salvation. I know that I shall be justified.” Eliphaz began again to ask, “Are the consolations of God small with thee?” and talked to Job as if he were a wicked man : so no wonder he said, “Miserable comforters are ye all !” But when he enumerated his trials he could look up and appeal to God, saying, “My Witness is in heaven, and my Record is on high. . My friends scorn me, but mine eye poureth out tears unto God.”

‘Oh, what a comfort it must have been to Job to be able to look up to his Heavenly Father with confidence, and feel that He knew him better than his friends ! This is what we may all feel ; for we

may all approach God through Jesus Christ our Saviour, and tell Him our troubles, and we may be quite sure of His love and pity; for "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him."

'It is too late now to finish the history of Job, but let us carry away this lesson—to tell our sorrows to God, and remember that "God is love."'

CHAPTER X.

ELIHU, AND MORE OF JOB'S HISTORY.

'MY dear friends, you will be glad to hear that when Eliphaz, and Bildad, and Zophar, had tried Job to the uttermost with all their hard speeches, and Job had declared his trust in God, saying, "He knoweth the way that I take, when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold," that they were at last silenced, as he recounted all he had done to glorify God. He told them to look back on his past life, and remember how he had helped the poor and the fatherless, comforting the widow, relieving the sick and sorrowful. Had he still been prosperous, they would have praised him. He tells them that he always acted as if in God's sight,

and they could not bring any charge to the contrary : so they were silent.

‘This gave Elihu a chance to speak, and though he was younger than the others, he spoke more to the point. He said he had waited for his elders to reply, but as they did not answer Job, he was constrained to remind him that his trials are God’s special messengers to convince him of sin, and to lead him to the Saviour. It is not for any omission of duty to his neighbour that God has visited him, but to make him search his heart; and if any pride or self-will lurks there, then if he will acknowledge it, saying, “I have sinned,” God will deliver his soul from destruction : for there is One who will redeem it, even Jesus Christ, who pays the ransom for our sins. Jesus died that we might live; Jesus suffered that we might be saved; and God gives people trouble here in this world, that they may think of their sins, and desire a Saviour. So Elihu showed that Job’s afflictions were messengers of mercy, sent in love to draw him nearer to God. He tells him that he was very wrong in losing the opportunity of honouring God, and that his sharp words and answers were like rebellion against God. He told him that his example had done harm instead of good. People might have learnt from him in his sickness, and he says, “Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art, and thy righteousness may profit the son of man :” for he reminds him there is much sorrow in the world,

and there is no one who saith, "Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?"

'To praise God in the night of affliction was what Job might have done, and we may all remember, that to bear cheerfully what God lays upon us, is one way by which we may honour Him. It is a work which only the sick and the sorrowful can do, and people will listen and learn. Every one can be bright, and happy, and thankful, in the sunshine of prosperity; but when dark clouds of sorrow come, then, only those who are taught of God can sing His praise, and declare that He does all things well. Let us all make the most of our opportunities for prayer and praise on our dark days, and complainings will be changed to thanksgivings. "Many shall hear this and be glad, and the mouth of all wickedness will be stopped." People will see that religion is of some use, since it lifts us above our troubles, and it assures those around us that God is indeed "a God at hand," and "a very present Help."

"Were half the breath so vainly spent
To heaven in supplication sent,
Our cheerful song would oftener be,
'Hear what the Lord hath done for me!'"

'Job was a true Christian, and he said, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," so he had the "root of the matter" in him; therefore even Elihu, who had

spoken better than the others, might have left him in God's hands. Let none of us follow the example of Job's comforters, and persecute those who are smitten by God. Those who add to the sorrows of others may not be surprised if God's judgments overtake them. "God trieth the righteous," and if hard words are among the sharp instruments He uses to brighten us for His jewels, let us learn meekness; not giving "railing for railing, but, contrariwise," let us give "blessing." If we cannot bless, let us be dumb, and bear reproaches patiently.

"Remember that thou magnify God's work, which men behold. Every man may see it; man may behold it afar off." This was good advice from Elihu, and it is a word for us, as well as for Job. It tells us that we ought not to forget to let our "light shine before men." It tells us that people can see what is right, and we know how very sharp-sighted they are. They notice what is done, more than what is said. They will observe a kind action, a church-going person, even if they take no heed to Gospel teaching and preaching. So let us be very careful to act like Christians; be kind and forgiving, be good neighbours, and ready helpers; then we shall show that we are trying to be like our blessed Saviour. If trouble comes, or any extra care, let us remember that we have a Father in Heaven, Almighty, able to do "exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think:"

so let us tell Him our trials and vexations, and ask Him to help us, and we shall find that in His own good time He will come to deliver us.

‘I knew a poor woman who had very great sorrows ; she lost her husband and all her children, yet she kept up her faith and trust in God. She never complained, but was always happy, thanking God for the mercies she had in her little garret. When I expressed surprise at her bearing her trials, she said, “I didn’t bear them. I took them to the Lord, and He bore them for me.” I agreed to follow her example, feeling it would be a help to myself if I took my sorrows to the Lord.

‘The old woman gave me this good advice. Said she, “If you take your troubles to the Lord, mind you *leave* them with Him ; don’t do as most people do, for they take their troubles to God in prayer, but they bring them back again.” Is not that the case, my friends? We kneel in prayer, and pour out our heart, and tell the Lord our griefs ; but we don’t feel sure He will help us : we groan and fret as if there were no God, so we don’t get the comfort we might from prayer, and we lose opportunities of showing to others that God is a sure Refuge. If we really put our trust in Him, and kept up heart, believing the Lord would help us, then people would be led to hope and think that He *is* the true God and the Everlasting King, ruling over everything, and making even troubles work together for good to them that love Him.

Job had forgotten that he could glorify God in the fires of affliction, when wearisome days and restless nights were appointed him. We forget, when we have aches and pains, that there is something else to do besides complaining.

‘ People get tired of hearing, “O my head !” or “Oh, my back is so bad!” They say, “Poor neighbour So-and-so is sad ! she’s always complaining !” But when they hear a great sufferer thank God that the pain is not worse, or that it is not *all over* the body, like poor Job’s dreadful sores, one feels *that* person is trying to honour God. One feels that God is giving that sufferer strength to bear, and that He will whisper peace and comfort, and sing songs of consolation to the patient in affliction. Let us all think of this. Now we will read a few verses out of Job, xxxv. 13, 14 ; xxxvi. 5-19, 24, 25 ; and conclude the history next time.’

CHAPTER XI.

CONCLUSION OF JOB’S HISTORY.

‘ JOB’S trials had brought out Job’s character. No one can tell what he or she is till tried. Some are very honest till temptation comes ; and then distress

has sometimes tempted people to take what came in their way.

‘Some would blush to commit sins, which in an unguarded hour they have been tempted to join in, losing character and respectability. It is no disgrace to be tempted, but it is a great disgrace and sorrow to fall by temptation.

“Blessed is the man that *endureth* temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.” As we are so ready to fall, we should often pray, “Lead me not into temptation,” and we should be careful not to run into temptation. If temptation comes to us, as it did to poor Job, God will always “make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it.” “He will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear.” When Job’s friends had done their utmost to try Job, and add to his afflictions, finding out Job’s weak points, and making him talk of his own upright character, leading him to boast that he knew all God’s ways and doings, the Lord put His servant Job once more into trial, to prove to him his ignorance, and to purge out his self-righteousness. God spoke to him, and told him of all His wondrous works.

‘When Job heard God’s voice, and all His weighty words, he felt what a poor weak sinner he was, and confessed he was “vile.” He said he had spoken once, and twice, but he would proceed no

further. God addressed him again, declaring His Almighty Power, creating the great whales and fishes of the sea, the huge elephants, and the beasts of the earth, as well as the stars in the sky, and the drops of rain. He preserves man, and takes his breath when He pleases. Job answered, "I know that Thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withheld from Thee . . . Therefore have I uttered that I understood not."

'Yes, Job felt how little he knew of God, now that God really spoke to him. He felt his ignorance, and his sin in what he had said before. He had long heard the words of God; but now he seemed to see God, and *that* close, intimate experience, made him "abhor" himself and "repent." This is what true penitents feel, when God shines into their hearts by His Holy Spirit; they see how holy God is, and how sinful they are. Instead of justifying and excusing themselves, they are grieved at their state. They hate their evil nature, and they pray, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" Yes, "me, a sinner!" is what all feel when they see God so holy and good. It is not till God's light shows us what we are, that we find out our real state; so we should pray, "Lord, show me *myself*," and then we shall find that the Lord will show us *Himself*. He will show us, that though He is holy, pure, and hating iniquity, yet He is a God "full of compassion, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercies for thousands,

forgiving iniquity ;" and so loving that "He gave His Only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." It is the penitent that are forgiven. It is the humble that are exalted.

'When Job confessed, "I abhor myself, and repent," then God appeared for his deliverance. He brought His servant out of his afflictions purified. Listen to the seventh and six following verses of the last chapter of the Book of Job, and read them slowly to yourselves at home. There we see that God was angry with Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, and honoured Job by telling them that, through his prayers, they should be forgiven their hard and foolish speeches. Then we find God restored Job, and gave him double what he had before ; for "he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and one thousand yoke of oxen, and one thousand she asses." All his relations and his acquaintances came to rejoice with him, bringing him money and presents. "He had also seven sons and three daughters." "So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning."

'We can now understand the inspired words of St. James, when he says, "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord ; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." Yes, my friends, we have heard of the patience of Job ; we might also add, we have heard

his *impatience* : but as St. James was not allowed to name *that*, we need not. When man repents, God forgives and forgets ; let us do likewise, and while we rejoice that poor Job is restored, and rich and happy, let us remember for our comfort that all, who faithfully and patiently bear present afflictions, shall find that the Saviour has a crown of glory prepared, with honour and happiness in the many Mansions above, where His redeemed will never want, never suffer, and never die. Are you expecting this ? It is to be had "without money, and without price." The Lord Jesus Christ died that He might get it for you. Look to Him, and He will save you. Pray to Him, and He will fit you for Heaven above, where sin and sorrow will not enter, and where God will wipe away every tear.

' Job's trials are over, but his example still lives. Let us pray to be as patient as he was, and let us watch, lest we sin as he did. Let us trust God as Job did, even in our dark and trying days, and let us try to say with him, " Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him ;" then we shall find that God will come to help us in His own good time, for, though " many are the afflictions of the righteous, yet the Lord delivereth them out of them all." '

CHAPTER XII.

MRS. WHITE'S LAST VISIT.

'OH, Mrs. White, we are so glad to see you!' said several of the poor mothers, as she entered the schoolroom the following Tuesday. 'So we are,' continued the Bible-woman; 'we thought you were gone quite away, and I was just thinking how dull we should be, as our lady won't be back till next week.'

'She wrote to tell me she was not returning so soon as I expected, and she asked if I could manage to come to-day; so I put off my journey for a day or two. And now, what shall I read, and what would you like to hear?'

Mrs. White's question had a prompt answer, for several whispered, and one clear voice asked, 'Please tell us about Job's wife; we want to know the end of her, please.'

'My dear friends, I cannot tell you what I do not know. The Bible is silent about her. We do not read whether she lived or died; but we may hope that, either she became a changed woman before she was the mother of his second set of children, or else that God gave Job a better wife in her

place : at all events, we see that he was not left to mourn her loss, or he could not have rejoiced over the birth of seven sons and three daughters after his recovery. To lose a good wife is one of the greatest bereavements a man can know, and wives should so strive to live that their husbands may feel their loss. Had Job's wife died while she was urging him to "curse God," he would have been relieved of an enemy; and as we hear nothing more of her, it is possible God may have cut her off in her sins. The Bible says, the "Lord trieth the righteous," and you know He tried His faithful servant Job; "but the wicked His soul hateth. Upon the wicked He shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup." So, my friends, if Job's wife did not repent, then we know her portion would be "the worm that never dieth, and the fire that is never quenched."

'But let us hope that she *did* repent, for then there is comfort in thinking of her. The Bible says, "When the wicked man," and that means the wicked *woman* also, "when he turns from the wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive." You see the worst characters may be saved, if they turn away from their wickedness. We are ready to say, No one so bad as Job's wife, who advised her husband to curse God, could ever be fit for heaven. Ah! my friends, the vilest can

be made holy, when the Holy Spirit enters the heart. He can soften the hardest, He can cleanse the most impure. No one need despair, for all are urged to pray for God to give them repentance, and to work a change in them. The promise is very encouraging to all. Our blessed Saviour Himself says, "If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him!" We have only to ask earnestly, wishing for God to make us good, and He will perfect His work in us.

'Now, if Job's wife became a changed woman, we can imagine it would add tenfold to the comforts of Job's house; for let a man be ever so rich, and have sons and daughters, and friends and servants, no earthly blessing can help him to enjoy all, equal to a good wife. If a man is happy, a wife can make him still happier; and if we read what St. Paul says, "Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord," we see that the great secret of being a good wife is subjection—to give in, not hold out, or haggle about trifles; for it is from not giving in with *little* things, that great fallings-out often grow. You have all heard about the couple who claimed the flitch of bacon, that is promised at a certain place to any married pair, who have been a whole year without quarrelling. You may remember that this couple went to receive it, being able truthfully to declare

that they had not exchanged one wrong word the whole year, and witnesses accompanied them to prove how happily they had lived.

‘Now, most unfortunately, just before they received it, they had a little difference as to cooking the fitch when they should get it home. The husband thought a few fried rashers would be tasty ; but the wife declared it would last longer if boiled, and what could be nicer than boiled bacon and beans? Well, well, you know it ended in a quarrel, so they lost their fitch altogether, and just because the wife forgot that it was *her* duty to *give in*. We all think the husband was very selfish, not to give up his wish, and so he was ; but if you want a man to give in, you must set the example.

‘St. Peter says, a man may often be won from bad to good by seeing the submission and meekness of his wife. A husband will not always bear to be talked to, but he can see a good temper, and a meek and quiet spirit, which are the ornaments that fit both rich and poor. They suit all seasons and all weathers ; they never get out of fashion. Sarah made herself approved to Abraham by her submission and respect, and wives can still copy her example.

‘We all know that “cleanliness is next to godliness,” and when people want to be good, they try to be better ; they know fresh air and clean water bring in health and keep out sickness. They feel more cheerful with a clean window, and a clean

face ; children are both more happy and more healthy when washed ; while many a man has kept away from the public, when he has been tempted home by a bright, clean wife. It is not every one who is blessed with a patient husband, like Job ; but it will be the happiest for every wife to learn to give in, and we may all find it good to think of these lines :—

“The kindest and the happiest pair
Will find occasion to forbear ;
And something every day they live
To pity, and perhaps forgive.”

‘Now, dear friends, we must put up work, and while we kneel, let us pray for God to help us to do our duty.’

MRS. SEAFORTH RETURNS HOME,

And attends the Mothers' Meeting again.

THOUGH the clergyman's wife had been absent for some time, she had not been forgotten, and when she appeared at the Mission-room there was a general smile of pleasure.

'I hope you are better, ma'am?' said one and another.

'Yes, thank you,' answered the lady; adding, 'I am glad to see you all looking much as usual, though I am sorry to hear from our Bible-woman, Mrs. Grey, that some of you have been ill in my absence. It is a great mercy to be restored, even if it is only to a moderate degree of health; but there are many lessons we often learn in sickness, and we should try not to forget them when we recover. There is one thing that we are specially reminded of in illness, which seldom has a serious thought when we are well and strong, and *that* is, our DEATH. Whether people are rich or poor, there is one place where all have to lie, and that is the grave; so, though we try to forget it when in health, yet as

soon as we are on a sick-bed, we remember that death came into the world with sin, and we feel there is no escape. Yes, the rich die as well as the poor; doctors die, as well as their patients; and the great point we all want to know is, how we may meet death without fear. So we turn to our Bibles, and many a dusty Bible gets wiped on a sick-bed, and the locked-up Bibles are brought out of drawers, and boxes, and cupboards, where they had been put carefully out of sight, and are opened and searched for comfort. This is one good thing that comes out of illness, for, when a Bible begins to be handled, there is a chance of its being read, and there is hope that its life-giving words will reach the heart, and will throw light there, for David says, "The entrance of God's word giveth light."

'Now, what light does the Bible give us on *death*? Why, a very bright light, for it turns an enemy into a friend. It shows us the Lord Jesus Christ, who, for our sakes, "overcame death, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers." The Bible shows that death is only the door to open into glory, so we need not fear anything, if we have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour. The New Testament tells us all about His coming into this world. We can there read of His holy life, His loving-kindness, and His daily going about doing good. Then His cruel death, paying the debt of our sins; and when He rose from

the grave on the day we call Easter Sunday, He was ready to offer us all His gifts, which are,—*Repentance*, to make us hate sin and turn from it; *Pardon*, to make us relieved of punishment; *Holiness*, to make us fit to approach a holy God; *Peace*, to keep our hearts and minds at rest; *Life*, in the place of death: for, “whosoever believeth in Jesus Christ shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life.” This is the Gospel, or good news of the New Testament, and happy are those who welcome it; for it brightens even a sad life with hope of better things to be enjoyed when this world is ended, and the bed of sickness is cheered with the prospect of life to come, knowing that to “depart, and be with Christ, is far better.” The death of the body is merely the parting with nature’s decaying frame; but, as in sleep the soul keeps active, and our dreams prove that the mind is awake, so the soul awakes in glory everlasting, when the immortal spirit leaves the mortal body. “Present with the Lord” is the joy of the believer, the moment this world is left, and as the hymn says,—

“Death has no sting
Since the Saviour has died.”

‘Of course people, who die *in* their sins, must answer for them, so no wonder death is an alarming idea to them. They know it is a sad reality, for *as* death leaves them, so will the Judgment-day

find them ; and awful will that day be to those, who have no Saviour to plead their cause. Many who do without a Saviour in life, are anxious for Him in death ; and it is well if people do not put off seeking Him, till too late to find Him.

‘ I knew an old gardener, who always hoped to be saved at last, but would never be induced to go to a place of worship, or use any means to get good for his soul. If urged to prepare for another world, he made promises of good intentions, but said he had not so much to repent of as some, for he had never been a drunkard. When told that “the wicked shall be turned into hell, and also the people that *forget* God,” he said, “I don’t forget Him, I often think of His sending rain, to water the ground which I plant. Some day I mean to go to church and worship Him.” But that day never came ; he kept putting off, week after week, till he grew old and deaf ; then he thought it useless to go, when he could not hear ; and as to praying at home, he did not know how. As last he was seized with a serious illness, and his relations fetched the clergyman. The old man had hardly breath to speak, but he gasped, “Pray for me, sir ; I cannot pray. Help me if you can, but I fear I have no chance now.” The clergyman prayed *with* him, and *for* him. He tried to point him to the Saviour, but the man was too deaf to hear a word, and he died in awful fear, alarming his relations by his groans, dreading to meet the God he had neglected,

and the Saviour he had despised : a warning to all, not to put off the care of the soul till a sick-bed.

‘It is a blessing when an illness comes in time, as a reminder, and we should always make a good use of it. Happy are those, whether in health or sickness, who inquire, “What must I do to be saved?” To them the answer comes, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” While looking to Jesus, the Holy Spirit teaches how to learn of Him, and shows how to lay hold of Him. Every one who is led to Jesus, turns away from wickedness, and the new life is a proof that God’s power is working within, to will and to do. The Lord Jesus, who gives repentance, comforts and draws onward in the heavenly way ; for He is not only the “Author,” but the “Finisher of our faith.” Now it is the Bible that tells us all this, and the Holy Spirit “takes of the things of Christ, and shows them to us.” When people read their Bibles it is a good sign, and though there are deep things in it beyond our comprehension, yet there is quite enough to make us “wise unto salvation,” which the most simple can understand, if they pray to God to teach them. I am very glad some of you have bought the sacred volume, and I should like to help you to enjoy it. My own experience tells me, that we do not know where to find the words we want for our own peculiar circumstances, neither do we gather the meaning of a passage, till after

long and careful study ; so it is only such as David who can say, "In the Lord's Word will I rejoice, in the Lord's Word will I comfort me."

'David's life is written in the Book of Samuel, and his experience is in the Psalms. You know he was a shepherd-boy before he was a king. No doubt you could tell me several parts of his history. You remember his killing the giant Goliath, and how often his life was endangered by Saul's jealousy ; his own grievous sin, and his deep repentance ; the rebellion of his son Absalom, and his tender affection for Jonathan, Saul's son. Then his great love for God's House, and the preparation he made for the magnificent temple, which his son Solomon built. All Bible readers know David's joys and sorrows, as recorded in Samuel and Chronicles. The Psalms he wrote are what we all value, when we want to take words of prayer or praise, and turn to God.

'It has been said, that no one can rightly enter into the Psalms who has not known sorrow, and who has not felt the "exceeding sinfulness of sin." To those who have, there are prayers for help, and sweet comforts to rejoice the heart, while the words out of depths of trial find response from those similarly exercised.

'The beginning of the Bible tells us of the beginning of all things. The beginning of the world ; the first day, the first night, the first dawn of light, the bright sun, moon, and stars in the

sky ; the land, and on it the grass and trees, with the animals, the fruit, and the flowers ; the birds and insects to fly in the air ; the sea, and all the fishes and water-fowl to swim in it ; and then the first man and woman to enjoy all God's gifts, which He pronounced "very good."

' But sin soon began, and then followed the first liar, the first murderer, the first drunkard ; and the beginnings of sin led to such an amount of wickedness, that you know God drowned the world by a flood ; but He saved Noah, because he turned away from wickedness. God never punishes the righteous with the wicked, and though they may live in the same house, and both suffer on the same sick bed, yet "the Lord will redeem the soul of His servant, and none of them that trust in Him shall be desolate."

' Abraham was another good man, and he was so devoted to what was right, that he was called the "friend of God." He had a good wife, a good son, a good grandson, and a good great-grandson ; for you know Isaac was his son, Jacob was his grandson, and Joseph was his great-grandson. I dare say you will agree with me, that their histories are beautifully told in the first book of the Bible, called Genesis ; and the history of Abraham's descendants, who are named the Jews, runs all through the Old Testament. For the sake of Abraham, they were blessed more than all the nations of the earth, and they were specially set apart as God's people.

It is very interesting to read how they were watched over and cared for by God Himself. When they were in bondage in Egypt, God brought them out with a mighty hand and stretched-out arm, having sent Moses to deliver them. Then He fed them and provided for them, till they reached the beautiful and fruitful land of Canaan, which they entered under their leader, Joshua.

‘We read of God’s goodness and their wickedness in the books called Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, &c.; and we find the secret of God’s blessing them, in spite of their sins, was, that “He loved the people,” and would keep His promise to His faithful servant Abraham. When other nations rose up against them, God raised up judges to fight for them, such as Samson and others. Then they wished for a king, and God gave them Saul, and David, and Solomon, and Hezekiah. There were many others, and some were so wicked, and the people were so ready to follow their bad example, that God sent prophets to warn them.

‘Now, though we are not Jews, yet we must remember that, “what was written aforetime was written for our learning.” In later days Jesus Christ came into the world to open Old Testament blessings to every one; so the beautiful promises given to the Jews are all offered freely, and they are so abundantly scattered by Isaiah, Jeremiah, and others, that I propose talking to you about

the wonders of the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah. If any one objects, please hold up the hand.'

No hand was raised, but a general whisper of approval encouraged a quiet widow to say, 'Thank you, ma'am. I want to understand more about Jeremiah, for my husband bid me look in it for a promise, and it has been my great comfort ever since his death.'

'No doubt it has, for that verse in Jer. xlix. 11, "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve and keep them alive, and let thy widows trust in Me," has cheered many a sorrowful widow.'

'And please, ma'am, my grandfather's name was Jeremiah, and mother used often to talk to us about him when we were children,' said a neat young woman, who had a fine fat baby on her knee, and she wiped a tear as she kissed it; so the lady thought perhaps baby was called after its mother's grandfather, and the mother's tear was probably a loving tribute in memory of the old man. She therefore asked if baby's name was Jeremiah.

The mother answered, 'No, ma'am. We had our first christened it, and we called him Jerry; but he died before he had cut all his teeth, and we've often grieved about it. My husband thought perhaps we had done wrong in giving him a Bible name; but I had told him, as grandfather was a good man, our little one might take after him if

we gave his name ; and we meant him to have had grandfather's old Bible, which father and mother willed to me. We often look at it and fear we made a mistake.'

'Don't do that, Mrs. Smith, but think rather that God saw the good wishes of your heart, and would do better for your child than you could have done ; so He took him out of temptation, and your little Jeremiah is safe in glory, where you will find him, if you follow on to know the Lord. It is time to close now, but while you fold your work I will read some lines which have comforted mothers on a similar loss, so perhaps you may all like to hear them.'

'NOT LOST, BUT GONE BEFORE.'

'*The Lord hath need of them.*' (Matt. xxi. 3.)

God needs His children, every one,
For He has work that must be done ;
He puts us each on this world's stage,
To act the part which suits our age.

The infant, with its cherub smiles,
Its parents' hearts from grief beguiles,
And sweetly points to God above,
Who sent the gift in tender love.

Sometimes the parents upward gaze,
And thank the Lord in hymns of praise ;
Sometimes they kneel, and ask in prayer,
To make their little child His care.

Or, it may be, the joyful birth
Enchains the heart to things of earth :
God calls the little one on high,
To lead its parents to the sky.

God sent the gift, He it recalled ;
Its parents grieve, and stand appalled ;
He says to them, ' It's safe above,
I took it home to draw your love.

Look up from earth and things of time,
To purer joys in yonder clime :
Your child has done its work on earth ;
It brought you gladness at its birth.

It calls you now to set your heart
On Mary's choice—that better part ;
It was *My* messenger of love,
And now I need it up above.'

Lord, send Thy grace, and teach us how
To learn of Thee our will to bow,
And by Thy Spirit comfort give ;
Speak to our souls and bid us live.

And what Thou callest us to do,
Grant grace sufficient to pursue ;
The task, whatever it may be,
Help us to do it unto Thee.

For when on earth our work is o'er,
God needs us on that blissful shore,
Where praise shall be our blest employ,
Following the Lamb our greatest joy.

The ransomed ones, now gone before,
We then shall meet to part no more,
And in our happy Home above
Join in declaring '*God is Love.*'

Each faithful one will then rejoice,
Each little one will raise a voice,
And add a note, the song to swell,
Of praise to God, who does all well.

TALK ON JEREMIAH.

'WE agreed that Jeremiah was to be our subject for to-day,' said Mrs. Seaforth, as she opened her Bible, after offering up a short prayer with the mothers, who assembled at the Mission-room.

'I told you last week how God chose the Jews to be a special people for Himself, as they were descended from faithful Abraham, and you may remember how God cared for them, and taught them and blessed them. If you read the books of Kings and Chronicles, you will see that after King David there were very few good kings, but it was in the reign of the good young King Josiah that the Pro-

phet Jeremiah was born. It seems that God had set Jeremiah apart, and made him holy from his earliest days; so when God wanted to send a message to His people, the Jews, He knew where to find a trusty messenger, one who would go where God sent him, and speak what God told him; and He called to Jeremiah to go and warn the people, and bid them turn from their sins. But though Jeremiah was a good prophet, he was a frail man, and he felt as you, and I, and many feel now-a-days, when we are asked to go to people, and warn them about their sins. We think we cannot speak wisely enough, and we say we would rather not go; the truth is, we are afraid of making enemies.

Now it was very natural that Jeremiah should feel timid, for almost every one around was forsaking God. Good King Josiah was dead, and his successor set up idols, and the people forsook God, and worshipped gods of gold, and silver, and wood, and stone, as they had done under the reigns of former bad kings. They had priests who encouraged them in wickedness, and prophets who prophesied smooth things, and said, "Peace, peace, when there was no peace." No wonder that Jeremiah was afraid to go among such wicked people! So when God called him to take His message, Jeremiah said, "Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child." No doubt Jeremiah felt he was as weak as a child compared with all the headstrong idolaters, and he probably thought how useless it

would be to go among such a hopeless set. "But the Lord said, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord." Then the Lord touched his mouth, and said, "Behold, I have put My words in thy mouth . . . and I will utter My judgments against them touching all their wickedness who have forsaken Me, and have burned incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands. Thou therefore . . . arise, and speak all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces . . . they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee."

'Those were precious promises to rest upon, were they not? and if we have to go with warnings among people who make us afraid, we shall do well to remember that God promises to be with His servants; and when God says, "I am with thee, to save thee and deliver thee," we need not fear to deliver God's message. It may only be to ask them to go to church, or to school, or remind them of the Lord's Day, or check an oath, or suggest what is right: but all, or any of this, needs strength beyond our own, for, like Jeremiah, we are ready to say, "I cannot do it: I'm only like a child." When Jeremiah was strengthened *by* God, he was ready *to speak for* God, and the first words God told



him to speak to the wicked Jews were words of love. He bid Jeremiah say that God remembered their early love, when He first took them to Himself as a people, and a nation, and when they followed Him in the wilderness, where He had fed them, and taught them, and led them safely till He had brought them into that plentiful country, where they enjoyed its fruits. Why, then, had they defiled the land with wickedness? And the Lord asks what iniquity have they found in Him that they have gone far from Him, and have walked in vanity. He tells them that trouble is sure to follow upon sin, so they will find that "it is an evil, and a bitter thing, to depart from the living God," and when trouble comes they must remember that their sins have procured judgments. He says in vain they have been corrected, for they were not the better for it; and when He has shown how they have loved others more than God, notwithstanding all He did for them, He still holds out entreaty, and asks, "Wilt not thou from this time cry unto Me, My Father, Thou art the guide of my youth?" He says they have done evil things as much as they could, and you and I should have expected after such conduct that if God had cut them off from being a nation, and had destroyed them, it would only have been what they deserved. But listen what God says to Jeremiah: "Go and proclaim these words, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not cause mine anger to

fall upon you : for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity."

'Oh, my friends, who but God could have pardoned like that? Who, but a God of love, could have shown such mercy?

'Then such promises follow of pastors to teach them, and full forgiveness, that some few seem to have joined with Jeremiah in saying, "Behold, we come unto Thee; for Thou art the Lord our God." They began to feel it was useless to expect salvation from any one else, and as they thought of their sins, there were some who felt ashamed of their past life, and they confessed, "We have sinned against the Lord our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God." Perhaps Jeremiah spoke *for* them, and his words of repentance were his own feelings, and not theirs. However, the Lord said, if they really would return, He would gladly welcome them; but they must not only confess their sins, they must put away their abominations, or terrible judgments would fall on them. Then God bid Jeremiah go up and down in Jerusalem, to see if there were any seeking truth, that He might pardon.

'Now, what do you think Jeremiah saw and heard when he went to find whether there were any good people in Jerusalem? He heard many talking of the Lord, but it was only to "swear *falsely*." They refused to return to God, and He

said, as a cage was full of birds, so were their houses full of deceit. He looked among their great men, and from the least even to the greatest every one was given to covetousness, and from the prophet to the priest every one dealt falsely.

‘Jeremiah turned to the women and children; surely *they* are not so bad? Listen to his report,—“The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle a fire, and the women knead their dough to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto other gods.” Was not that dreadful? What would good Abraham have felt, if he had known that his descendants would forsake *that* God he had so loved, and that even the women and children would help to offer sacrifices to false gods?

‘Perhaps the mothers thought it was no use to go contrary to their husbands, and the children might as well just pick up the sticks to light the fires; but you see God thought it so important, that He had it recorded in the Bible; and we may learn from it that “all things are naked and open before God,” and even women and children may add to the judgments of a nation. *We* do not offer sacrifices to idols, nor do we pray to the Virgin Mary, and call her queen of heaven, taking the honour from Him, who is King of kings and Lord of lords, and who proclaimed by His servant Moses, “The Lord our God is *one* Lord.” But suppose God were to send a prophet to look along

our streets, and in our houses, what would he see and hear?

‘I’ll tell you what *I* often hear in the streets. I hear God’s name; but it is not spoken in praise. It is taken in vain by many, who make no other use of it than to abuse it. Yes, men, and I grieve to add, that women, and even children, swear! Some do it thoughtlessly, and speak lightly, not thinking they are dishonouring and displeasing God; but, my friends, will you try to check the bad words in your children, and only keep short prayers, “God bless me,” “Lord, have mercy,” till your serious moments, when you are able to think of what you are saying, and to whom you are speaking?

‘Now, there are other things we hear in the streets. We hear street cries, of things to sell on God’s holy day. And we see newspapers, and water-cresses, and muffins, and fruit, offered for sale. God knows people have very short memories, and so He put a special reminder to the fourth commandment, which begins thus: “REMEMBER that thou keep holy the Sabbath Day.” It goes to my heart to hear those cries, and when I see people stop the criers, and buy their goods, it grieves me; for it tells me that there are people who break God’s commands in the houses, as well as in the streets. Now if you and I want to stop Sunday trading, we must do our part; and I hope you will give it up yourselves. If *there were* no buyers, there would be no sellers;

and though it may cost you a little self-denial, yet on your death-bed your conscience will not be burdened by the remembrance of Sundays broken, and God's reminder to keep it holy despised. The memory is sharp enough on a death-bed, and many a forget will come to mind, when too late to make up for neglect.

'I have told you what may be seen and heard in our streets ; shall I go into the houses, and see what is going on there? Some days I see washing and ironing ; on other days sweeping and dusting, or scrubbing and cleaning ; then, again, there are baking days, and times for cooking and washing-up, as well as hours for needle-work, and mending and making ; with baby-nursing and children-minding every day, where there is a family. The summer brings a little outing, perhaps, while winter has its pleasant tea-party, and our weekly meeting here helps to fill up our time. All this is right and good ; for there is a time for everything, and God has put us each in our place in this world, where we may do our duty by being good wives, and good mothers : so that if He were to send a Jeremiah to look into our rooms, and report about us, we need not fear, unless we are doing what is wrong. But suppose he were to hear that we found time for everything but our prayers ; *that* would be displeasing to God. And suppose we had time to go into a neighbour's house, but never made it convenient to

go to God's House, would not that tell against us? Suppose he were to hear, that when Sunday came the fathers went to the ale-house, or propped up an idle corner, and the mothers baked and cooked, while the children played in the streets; would not that be almost as much disrespect to God as those people in Jeremiah's time? They *did* prepare for some kind of service, but it was an idolatrous one, which was very wicked. However busy we are, we find time to eat and drink; we know we shall work all the better for food, and we shall never be losers by prayer; prayer will help us to do our duty: so remember the wise and true saying, "Prayer and provender hinder no man." Put prayer first, and all will follow in their right places. Begin each day with *private* prayer, and begin each week with *public* prayer, then you need not fear God's judgments; for He is so ready to forgive and show mercy, that you may be sure He will say to you, as He did to His people of old, "I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely." Perhaps you feel, "I don't know how to begin; I can't be different." Well, ask God to help you. Each morning kneel and pray, "Lord Jesus, help me;" then try every day, and in making your home comfortable, you will get ready for a quiet rest on Sunday, and time will be made to worship God. Make a point of sending your children to school, then they will not hinder you, and they will be getting good. It is nice for all who can, to

have a comfortable Sunday dinner, and that is easily managed by a little Saturday arrangement. I know mothers of large families who have gone to church in the morning with their husbands, and yet have had a nice bit of dinner on their return. Where there are little children this cannot always be done, but the husband may often be induced to go if the wife has a clean shirt ready to tempt him; and later on in the day she may take her turn, if he will mind the children. "Where there's a will, there's a way," you know; therefore do what you can in the matter. And now we must close.'

MORE ABOUT JEREMIAH.

'MY dear friends, you remember what I told you last week of God's gracious offers of mercy to the Jews, and that He sent Jeremiah to look up and down the streets of Jerusalem to see if there were any that would turn to Him, that He might pardon them. But, you know, Jeremiah found the women were as bad as the men, so no wonder that the children were learning to be like them. If you want children to be good, you must train them rightly; but if you wish them to follow the evil of

the world, you can leave them alone ; for Satan will save you the trouble of sinful training. He is only too glad to get hold of those children who are left to themselves. He soon takes them in hand, and such are led on from bad to worse, till they bring their mothers to shame. So let me entreat you to send your children to school, for that is a step out of Satan's way.

'But to return to Jeremiah. When he found all the people, from the greatest to the least in the city of Jerusalem, that they "walked in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward and not forward," refusing to receive correction, he told them that, as they would not accept God's offers of mercy, therefore judgment should come upon them. He told them that their beautiful city of Jerusalem should be desolate, their magnificent Temple should be destroyed, and their fruitful land should be laid waste. There should be "no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig-tree." Besides all this, there should be sickness and sorrow, through famine and pestilence. Serpents should come into their land and bite them ; foreign armies should invade their country, and kill their mighty men, and carry their daughters captive.

'Jeremiah shed tears, and could not continue telling all the grief that would come upon them. He told them they had taught their tongues to speak lies, and that even if one spoke peaceably to *his neighbour* with his *mouth*, "in his heart he was

laying in wait to deceive," and they had forsaken the law. The Lord asks, "Shall I not visit for these things?" "Behold, I will feed this people with wormwood, and will give them water of gall to drink. . . I will scatter them among the heathen . . . and I will send a sword after them."

'When Jeremiah had pronounced these fearful judgments, he bid them fetch the mourning women. The mourning women were those who were hired to make a great weeping and wailing in times of sorrow or death. So Jeremiah said they had better begin at once to cry and howl, for death would soon be among them; it would enter into their palaces, and there would be no children or young people left in the streets. He added, neither wisdom nor riches would be of any help then. The mighty man need not glory in his might, nor the wise man in his wisdom, nor the rich man in his riches; for there would be no safety for any who did not acknowledge God. Therefore, only those should glory who understood God's dealings, and knew Him by His lovingkindness, and judgment, and righteousness, which He exercises in the earth.

'Jeremiah then reasoned with the people about their idols, which they had copied from the heathen, and he wondered that they should worship such things that they had made themselves out of wood, and decked with silver, and nailed together; for it was impossible that such gods could help them at all in their trouble.

‘Jeremiah now prayed for himself. Perhaps he thought he might have been an idolater, if God had not preserved him from sin, and he said, “O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in Thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.”

‘The best of people need correction, and the more we are taught by the Holy Spirit of God, the more clearly do we see our sins. It is a good sign when we each feel, “*I have sinned* ;” for no one really knows what an evil heart is, till God shines within and shows it. That is a sight which makes us wish to be better, and when we hear the prayer of the clergyman in church, “Have mercy upon us, miserable sinners,” those who feel their sins are ready to join in the words. And God is full of mercy, and long-suffering; “though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion, according to the multitude of His tender mercies.” He punishes His children for their good, as a parent often does the child that is dearly loved; but it is only the wicked who *persevere* in wickedness, that come in for *judgments*. So Jeremiah had nothing to fear, though perhaps he was afraid he would have to share the dreadful cup of wrath, which God was about to pour upon Jerusalem. But Jeremiah was safe, as all are who trust in the Lord.

‘As he could not persuade the people to be

better, he prayed for them. It was too late, however, to help them by prayer, for their sins were so great, God told Jeremiah not to pray for them; but He bid him go and tell them again of more judgments. So Jeremiah went, and the men of Anathoth said, "Prophesy not, lest thou die by our hand." But Jeremiah did not know that they had intended to kill him; and God pronounced this word, "Behold, I will punish them; their young men shall die by the sword, their sons and their daughters shall die by famine, and there shall be no remnant of them: for I will bring evil upon the men of Anathoth."

'Thus we see that God punishes with special judgments those who rise up against His own servants. He "executes judgment for all that are oppressed," and it is a fearful thing to fall into His hands. Let no one, therefore, despise God's messengers, for the Most High is over all, and He knows, and sees, and hears. He delights in hearing the humblest prayer, and He sees even the first endeavours to do right; therefore let us not despise the day of small things, or hinder another from good endeavours by a smile or a word of derision. And if *we* are trying to do our best, let us be encouraged by God's love and care of Jeremiah, knowing that He is a God of love to all His children, and will preserve them from evil. Yea, He promises to be as a wall of defence round them, to keep them from danger.

‘Next week I hope to tell you something fresh about Jeremiah ; we must not continue the subject any longer to-day.’

MORE ABOUT JEREMIAH.

‘WE left Jeremiah in fear, because some not only despised his message, but threatened to kill him for delivering it. You know God promised to preserve him, so Jeremiah was safe ; and when God sent him again to the people, he went trusting in God’s Almighty protection. Many will be convinced by deeds, if they will not listen to words ; so God told Jeremiah to get a new linen girdle and wear it. The people in that country do not wear tight cloth coats, as the men do in England. They have loose thin garments, suitable for the warm climate, and they fasten them round the waist with a girdle, or sort of sash : these girdles are made of silk and other materials. God told Jeremiah to get a linen one. After wearing it for a time, God ordered him to take it off, and go down to the river and bury it in a hole by the rock. Jeremiah did so, and left it there.

‘After many days God told him to fetch the *girdle*, so Jeremiah went and dug it up : but the nice

clean linen girdle was spoilt, and fit for nothing, as you may suppose. God then called attention to it, and said, just as a girdle cleaves to a man, so had He caused to cleave to Him the people of Jerusalem ; and as the girdle was spoilt, so He would "spoil the pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem," and Jeremiah urged them to repent of their pride, and entreated them to humble themselves. He asks, "O Jerusalem, wilt not thou be made clean?" He knew they could no more change their hearts, than could a black man change his skin ; but God can cleanse the vilest heart, and if they prayed in David's words, "Wash me," they could have said, as he did, "I shall be whiter than snow." No one is too vile for the blood of Jesus to cleanse, and "whosoever," whether Jew or Gentile, "calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

'But the Jews were too proud to pray. They were above being told of their faults. They would not own their sins, they were too proud to confess they had done wrong ; so God's first judgment overtook them, and it was famine. How do you think it came? Why, just for want of rain. The wells, and pools, and rivers, all dried up, because there was no rain ; and there was such a dearth, that even the nobles could not get water for their little ones. Those who went to fetch it, returned with their vessels empty. The cattle also suffered, because there was neither grass nor water ; for the grass was burnt up for want of rain, and there was no water

to water the flocks. The cows forsook their calves, they were so distressed ; and the asses stood on the high ground, to try and catch the breeze to cool their parched mouths !

‘ Oh, what trouble for man and beast through the withholding of rain ! The people were now obliged to own that their idols were no gods : they could not make a single drop of rain : so the power of Almighty God was too great to be denied, and Jeremiah prayed in behalf of the people, saying, “ O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do Thou it for Thy name’s sake.” He meant, by “ do Thou *it*,” do Thou let it rain. Rain was the great thing they wanted. All were mourning the loss of it, all felt the need of it, more or less, and Jeremiah knew that God saw the judgment that it was to be without rain, so he need not explain their need ; but, “ do Thou *it*,” would be enough : only he added, “ O Lord, leave us not ;” for he felt, if God were to leave them, they should indeed perish.

‘ The Lord told him not to pray in their behalf ; for He said they had loved to wander, and so they must take the consequences : but Jeremiah pleaded for them ; listen to his words in Jer. xiv. 20–22 : “ We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers ; for we have sinned against Thee. Do not abhor us, for Thy name’s sake . . . remember, break not Thy covenant with us. *Are there* any among the vanities of the Gentiles

that can cause rain? or, can the heaven give showers? Art not Thou He, O Lord our God? Therefore we will wait upon Thee; for Thou hast made all things."

'Those were very earnest and beautiful words, but the Lord said, it was of no use to pray for people who would not humble themselves. He remembered His covenant with their forefather Abraham, and how He had fulfilled His promises in times past, even in spite of their sins, in the days of Moses and Samuel, who then interceded in their behalf; but He declared, if Moses and Samuel could come to life and pray, their prayers would be no avail, and God bid Jeremiah tell of greater judgments that awaited them. "I will appoint over them four kinds of judgments, saith the Lord: the sword to slay, and the dogs to tear, and the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the earth to destroy. And I will cause them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth . . . I will bereave them of children, I will destroy my people, since they return not from their ways."

'Now, when Jeremiah told the people this awful news, they cursed him. He had never been anything but kind to them, and they ought not to have borne him ill-will, just for delivering God's message. Though Jeremiah lived before the New Testament times, yet he did what the New Testament bids us all do: he prayed for those who despitefully used him, and he told his trouble to

God. He said, "O Lord, Thou knowest . . . that for Thy sake I have suffered rebuke." It is a great comfort in trial to know that God understands all about it, and if we have not brought it upon ourselves by any wrong-doing, we have nothing to fear.

'The Lord then cheered the prophet by special promises, and Jeremiah found God's words so welcome to him, that he felt as if he could eat them, and he said they were "the joy and rejoicing of his heart." Then God told Jeremiah to wait in for a little, and not go out among the people ; and if any came to him he could take the precious from the vile, and God would accept them, and preserve them with Jeremiah, who should be as a fenced brazen wall. Others might fight against them, but they should not prevail ; for "I am with thee, to save thee, and to deliver thee, saith the Lord ; and I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible." No doubt there was one here and there "faithful found among the faithless," who, startled by the dearth and the famine, joined Jeremiah, and shared his protection. Such would be ready to see that the heathen idols were worse than useless, when they could not cause the slightest shower of rain to fall on the parched earth.

'We are so accustomed to rain that we almost forget that it is God's gift, and that He sends it to make the grass grow for the cattle, and corn to *grow for our bread*, as well as fruit-trees and herbs

for the service of man. The flowers, too, would cease to bloom if there were no refreshing showers ; so there would be a loss of many blessings, if rain did not come in its season. Besides, what should we do for cooking and cleanliness, if all the wells were dry ? There would be no cups of tea, if the kettle could not be filled, no washing of ourselves or our children, or our clothes, and no laundry-work could be done, if the water-tubs were empty. I remember one summer, when there was no rain for so many weeks, that all the pumps, and ponds, and brooks, around our village, were dried up. People had to walk a long distance to a river, and fill their kettles ; and some used to fetch it in pails, or in a water-cart, and sell it at 2*d.* and 3*d.* a quart. The poor cattle were sadly distressed ; they were driven to the river to quench their thirst, and it was a long way off for most of them. At last there was a special prayer in the church for rain, and when God in His mercy sent it, there was a general thanksgiving. Do not let *us* wait for God to withhold our blessings, before we thank Him.

‘ Now, my friends, we must not talk more to-day ; but remember for your comfort, that if you take Jeremiah’s God to be your God, you may be sure of all Jeremiah’s promises being fulfilled to you.’

“ Make you God’s service your delight,
He’ll make you wants His care.”’

JEREMIAH CONTINUED.

‘I AM glad that you are not tired of hearing of Jeremiah ; but I understand that some of you are out of patience with the idolatrous Jews, and you think you would not have acted as they did. I don’t believe any of us would wish to follow wicked devices, as they did ; but we none of us know the deceitfulness of our own hearts, till we see how easily they lead us astray. I never thought I should apply any of their curses to myself, till one day, when I was in great sorrow, and then I began to think I had been deceiving myself, in fancying I was trusting in God, when the fact of my being too cast down to find comfort under the loss of a friend, showed that I had been leaning on an earthly prop ; so God removed it, to show me on what a frail thing I had trusted for support. I looked in my Bible for words of comfort, and my eye fell on these verses in the 17th chapter of the Prophet Jeremiah,—“ Thus saith the Lord, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and *shall not* see when good cometh ; but shall inhabit

the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited."

'Those verses show, that leaning on man does not make people happy. Man is changeable when living, and even a faithful friend fails if he dies: so those that have nothing better to trust in, are like the withered heath—no freshness in them; they cannot take comfort: so they are as badly off as those who live in a desert place, for they refuse God's sympathy.

'Now, listen to the contrast in the next verses. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in *the Lord*, and whose hope the Lord is; for he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful [or anxious] in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."

'After this beautiful description of the man who trusts in God, the prophet adds, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." When I had read these words, I felt God was giving me the fruit of my doings. I had been deceiving myself in thinking I was trusting in God, but my inconsolable grief proved I had been trusting in man: for I should not have been parched up, as if all comfort was gone, when those

dear to me died, if God had been my mainstay; for He never changes, never dies, and He can make up for all losses, and give us streams of refreshment; and it is better to learn this lesson in time, than find, when too late, that creature love has made us forget the Creator. It is then we feel our sins, and knowing how ready God is, not only to pardon, but to bind up the broken heart, we pray with Jeremiah, "Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for *Thou* art my praise."

'Yes, we no longer look downward at our sorrows and losses, but we look upward to our Almighty Friend; we cease to talk so much of man, and we talk of what a Helper we have in God. *He* is our praise, for He is now acknowledged to be everything to us. No doubt Jeremiah found the comfort of leaning on God; for he had no help from man. You know even the people of Anathoth, who had probably seen him from a child, as he was a native of Anathoth, cursed him, and wanted to kill him. Jeremiah had also other enemies, who tried to "smite him with the tongue;" and when he reproved their Sabbath-breaking, and told what blessings God would send if they would keep the day holy, but that judgments would always follow the Sabbath-breaker, they only derided him, and ill-used him; and Jeremiah thought in his heart, that, as all *went on* as usual, they would continue to prosper.



‘So God told him to go down to the potter’s house—that was the place where pots and mugs were made out of clay; and Jeremiah went and saw the potter making a vessel, but it did not turn out nice shape, so he threw it down, and broke it to pieces, and then moulded another vessel that pleased him better. God called Jeremiah’s attention to the potter, and He said that it was just as easy for Him to destroy a nation, as it was to a potter to break a mug. So He told Jeremiah to go and tell the people that He should surely send war to kill them, and to carry them away from Jerusalem, if they did not repent.

‘God took special trouble with the King Jehoiakim, because he was the son of good King Josiah. Sons, who have godly fathers, must expect special judgments if they will not attend to their parent’s counsel, or example. Josiah had made much of God’s House and God’s Worship. He had been a wise king, and a kind friend to the poor. He had done justly, and loved mercy; so it had been well with him. But his son Jehoiakim neglected God’s House, and ornamented his palace. He cared nothing for his people, but only thought of himself. “His eyes and his heart were after covetousness;” so he was always grasping money, but never paying any. He had his beautiful palace lined with sweet-smelling cedar-wood, and had it painted with gorgeous colours: but he gave no wages to his workmen; so God declared

that for all his sins he should be punished. Not only was the kingdom to suffer for sins as a nation, but he himself should die such a death, that he should be left outside the gates of Jerusalem; and he should have no funeral, but he should "be buried with the burial of an ass," and no one should lament for him.

'It is not likely such a man would have any to mourn his loss. People may hire mourners with black cloaks to follow their funeral, and attend their corpse to its last resting-place; but only kind people get real mourners to weep for them.

'A kind neighbour has often more genuine mourners than those who live in mansions. It is not the money, but the heart, that makes people beloved. If people give their heart, they give with it all they can; and though riches are very important helps, yet love goes the farthest in winning love. A liberal heart "deviseth liberal things," and it is well when a liberal purse is possessed by such, for it is opened wide, and readily distributed. But even "kind words outweigh the heaviest purse," says a writer: so, my friends, let us be always on the watch to give a kind word, and offer a helping hand; then we shall never be left, like Jehoiakim, without any one to lament our death.

'There was another punishment pronounced upon wicked Jehoiakim, and *that* was, that he should have no son to succeed him; which no doubt would be a sad trouble to him, as he had

made his palace so beautiful, and he had two boys. Most likely he thought they were sure to live, being healthy, and he did not feel fearful of their death, never thinking how easily God could prevent their being kings by accidental calamity or war. Jehoiakim took no heed to all the warnings, and God sent Jeremiah to the people of the land with another message. He told him to take a bottle in his hand, and when he had uttered the judgments that would be sent if they did not repent, he was to throw the bottle down, and tell the people, that just as that bottle was broken, so would God break them up from being a nation.

‘Now when Jeremiah did all this, and explained about the broken bottle, the governor put Jeremiah in the stocks; and Jeremiah wished he had never been born, for every one mocked and derided him. He tried to be silent, but he could not help delivering God’s message; and he told the governor that he and all his family would be carried away captives to Babylon, far from their own land. Then Jeremiah was put into the court of the prison, and there he was alone; so he had no one to talk to, and he could not go out and deliver God’s message.

‘But God can always use His people if He pleases, and He wanted to warn Jehoiakim once more; so He told Jeremiah to make a book, and send it out to be read. There was no printing in those days, but the people who made books employed men, called scribes, to write them, just as

we employ printers to print books. So Jeremiah sent for Baruch the scribe, to write what God told Jeremiah. First they made the book, which was easily done, for there was no binding; and sometimes one very long sheet, or several fastened together, one after the other, making one length, was put on a roller like our window-blinds, and people unrolled piece by piece as they wanted. Some of the rolls were made of separate sheets, like our almanacks, and fastened together on a roller at the top; so when one sheet was read they turned it over and read another, and I think it was on one of this kind that Baruch the scribe wrote Jeremiah's prophecy.

'When it was all finished Jeremiah said, Now I want the people to hear it, but I cannot go out. I am not allowed to stir from this place, and I hear some of the people are met for fasting and prayer in the Lord's house. Baruch, you take this roll, and go to them, and read all these judgments that God has pronounced upon this land; when they hear they may repent, and may yet be saved.

'So Baruch took the roll and read it to the people who had assembled in the Lord's house. After this one told another of the words they had heard, and the news reached some of the great men who were not present, and they sent to Baruch, and asked him to read it to them privately; and *Baruch* read the roll all through.

'The princes then bid him and Jeremiah go and hide themselves; but they laid the roll up carefully in a safe place, and went into the king and told him all about it. So the king sent one of them to fetch it, that he might hear for himself. Now it was a cold day, and the king sat in his winter house, where was a fire burning; and when the King Jehoiakim and his princes were seated round the fire, he commanded the roll to be read aloud. When three or four leaves had been read, King Jehoiakim cut it with his penknife, and put all the roll into the fire till it was entirely consumed. Then he sent for Baruch and for Jeremiah, intending probably to put them to death; but they could not be found, for "the Lord hid them," so they were safe. And God told Jeremiah to take another roll, and tell Baruch to write the same words over again, adding more severe threatenings to that wicked Jehoiakim, who was soon after slain by the King of Babylon; and though his son reigned for a few months, he was not a king in his own right.

'The King of Babylon took possession of the kingdom, and carried the chief of the people captive to Babylon. He left Jehoiakim's son to collect taxes, but finding he did not pay them he went again to Jerusalem, and carried him far away to his own city, Babylon; and he burned the palaces, and the beautiful temple, and took all the gold and silver vessels that King Solomon had made, and

thus some of the judgments that Jeremiah had foretold were fulfilled.

‘Was it not dreadful that King Jehoiakim should burn God’s message? This wicked act did not alter the judgments, but only added to them. No wonder that poor Baruch wished he had not written, and was afraid of the consequences. God, however, told him, wherever he went he should be safe, and that he should not lose his life. Only He gave him this caution : He said, “Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not.” Perhaps Baruch had wanted to keep in with the rich people, so he needed the caution not to be over-anxious for this world’s honours; but he could rest assured that he would never lose anything worth keeping by his service to God.

‘And that is a lesson to cheer each one of us. We may not be put in prison for religion, as Jeremiah was; we may not have to hide lest we should be killed for reading God’s message, and we may not see good books burnt, or God’s word torn or ill-used; but we may not always find it treated with that respect it deserves. Lightly used is generally lightly loved. So, my friends, don’t allow your Bibles to be used lightly, and handled by careless hands. Never permit it to be put for something to stand on, and don’t allow a leaf to be torn. Remember, it is God’s Book; so treat it with reverence.

‘Our King Edward VI. was a great contrast to

wicked Jehoiakim ; for one day, when he saw a large Bible put to stand upon, in order that something might be obtained which was out of reach, he took it up and kissed it, and would not allow the sacred volume to be put to such an improper use. And if ever you are laughed at for reading it, think of Jeremiah and fear no evil, for God will bless you.

‘Now we have had a long talk ; next week I shall try and finish Jeremiah’s history : but I think you have heard enough to-day.’

END OF JEREMIAH.

‘YOU remember that Jeremiah was put in the stocks for warning the people of their sins. He was afterwards sent to prison. There were other prophets who preached and prophesied about the same time, such as Ezekiel, and Habakkuk, and Zephaniah ; besides some who had lived before, as Hosea, Joel, Amos, and Micah. All the preaching and the prophesying was not wholly in vain, for some took heed and repented ; so God overruled the judgments that fell on the land for their good. God showed Jeremiah how it was that He could

make the same judgments both punish and benefit, by calling his attention to two baskets of figs.

‘In that country, fig-trees grow as commonly as apple-trees do in England, and perhaps it was the time, just then, for gathering the figs. So Jeremiah saw the figs gathered, and the bad put into one basket, and the good into another ; then the man carried both away, but of course the bad were put to a different use to the good : it was only the good figs that were thought worth offering for the king’s table, or for any great entertainment. The bad, if eaten at all, were given to those who could get nothing better ; but they were hardly considered anything more than refuse.

‘Now these good figs and bad figs, God told Jeremiah, might teach him that the people would be carried captive by the same king, to the same land, at the same time ; but that the righteous and the wicked would be treated very differently. The good would go for their benefit, but the bad would go for their hurt ; and God sent special promises to encourage the righteous. There were some probably who were dying through wounds in battle, or perhaps were separated far from their families ; to such, this promise would be very comforting. “Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive ; and let thy widows trust in Me.” *That* also would be very comforting when the husbands were in Babylon, *and the women and children were left behind in*

Jerusalem. Then these words would be cheering: "Be not afraid of the King of Babylon, of whom ye are afraid: be not afraid, saith the Lord, for I am with you to save you, and to deliver you from his hand. And I will show mercies unto you, that he may have mercy upon you, and cause you to return to your own land."

'These are some others of the most beautiful verses in the Bible: listen as I read out of the 31st chapter of the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah. "Thus saith the Lord, The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness. . . . Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee. He that scattereth Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd doth his flock. Their soul shall be as a watered garden, and they shall not sorrow any more at all . . . for I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul. . . . I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more."

'Those were some of the precious promises that God sent by Jeremiah to give the good Jews for their comfort; and *we* may enjoy them also, if we are trying to obey God's laws. Of course the wicked Jews had no such comfort: people must "cease to do evil, and learn to do well," before they can share the blessings of the righteous.

'Zedekiah, who was now ruling by order of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, was not so

hardened as his brother Jehoiakim, and he released Jeremiah from prison ; so he went in and out among the people, and spoke to the men whom the King of Babylon had brought from his country ; and no doubt he thought it was a good opportunity to talk to them about the true God. He also sent messages to his own people, who had been carried away captive, bidding them settle quietly and contentedly in the foreign land, and do their duty both to God and to the King of Babylon, and then it would be well with them.

‘When some Jews saw Jeremiah talking to the foreigners in Jerusalem, they declared he was siding with the King of Babylon and his people ; so they told their King Zedekiah, who had him put in prison. Now, when he was in prison, God told him that the Jews should return to their own land after seventy years ; and to prove *this*, He bid Jeremiah buy a piece of ground in Jerusalem. Just then, his nephew came to him in prison, to offer to sell him a piece ; so Jeremiah readily bought it ; and thus he proved to the people, that though things seemed against them, yet he believed the time would come, when they should all have houses and gardens again in Jerusalem.

‘When Jeremiah had remained in the prison many days, King Zedekiah sent and took him out, and asked secretly whether the Lord had revealed anything to Jeremiah about himself. And *Jeremiah said*, Yes ; “for thou shalt be delivered

into the hand of the King of Babylon ;” and Jeremiah entreated to be taken out of the dungeon : so the King Zedekiah commanded that he should be put in the court of the prison, and ordered that he should have bread given him every day, as long as there was any left. Thus Jeremiah was not allowed to want, and he found that God’s promise is true, “ Bread shall be given thee ;” and no one will ever find *that* promise fail, who trusts in Jeremiah’s God.

‘ After this, the King of Babylon came again to Jerusalem, and Jeremiah advised all to submit to him ; and the people who wanted to fight against him were so angry with Jeremiah, that they got leave from King Zedekiah to put him in prison again. Jeremiah was now put in a very loathsome dungeon, which was all deep in mud, and Jeremiah was let down into the dungeon, and sunk in the mire.

‘ Poor Jeremiah ! he was never so badly off before ; but though he was out of sight, he was not out of mind. God was watching him, and He brought to light one of His servants, of whom perhaps we should never have heard, if he had not been wanted. The Lord sometimes tries His own people, to bring out the kindness of those who are secretly serving Him. Do you think it was one of the Jews, Jeremiah’s own countrymen, that helped him ? No, it was not a Jew. Do you think it was one of the men from Babylon ? No, it was one we should not have guessed ; for it was a black

man! a negro servant in the king's house. His name was Ebed-melech. When Ebed-melech heard what a dreadful place Jeremiah was in, he spoke to the king, saying, "My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon, and he is like to die there."

'Then the king commanded Ebed-melech to take thirty men to help him get up Jeremiah out of the dungeon, before he died. I should think it was a deep, damp place, almost like a well without water; so it would be difficult to get Jeremiah out, for there were no steps, and probably they had not a ladder long enough. However, they threw strong cords for him to hold by; and lest the cords should hurt Jeremiah, they let down old rags to put under his arms, and then, with the cords resting on the soft rags, they pulled him up, and Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison. Zedekiah, the king, then went to him, and asked him privately whether the King of Babylon would really get into Jerusalem, for his army was outside, and Jerusalem was besieged. All the gates were shut, no one dared go out, lest the King of Babylon should rush in, and take possession of it. The provisions were almost gone, there was scarcely a loaf left, and Zedekiah hoped that the King of Babylon would get tired of waiting, and would return to Babylon. But Jeremiah told Zedekiah he might as well give *in first as last*, and it would save much suffering

from famine, and from sickness which the famine caused, if he would submit to the King of Babylon; for he would most certainly be taken to Babylon: and the Prophet Ezekiel had told Zedekiah the same, only Ezekiel added, that though Zedekiah would go to Babylon, he should not see it. All this came to pass, for the King of Babylon was so enraged with Zedekiah holding out against him, that he at last set fire to the city, and killed all who tried to escape. He slew Zedekiah's sons, and then he put out Zedekiah's eyes, and carried him, and most of the people, to Babylon.

'Thus, you see, the words came true, that Zedekiah should go to Babylon, but should not see it; for, of course, he could not see it when his eyes had been put out. The Prophet Jeremiah was left in Jerusalem, and so was Baruch the scribe, and also that kind black servant, Ebed-nelech, to whom God gave a special promise for his kindness to Jeremiah. God said he should not lie by the sword, or by famine, or by pestilence, and he should not be carried captive to Babylon; so he was rewarded even in this world for his kindness to Jeremiah: and we may learn that those who are kind to good people shall be specially blessed. A favour shown to them, God feels as if it were done to Himself; the blessed Saviour taught his in the Gospels, and He said that those who befriended a righteous man, not only because he was in need, or because he was a relation, or a

neighbour, or because he was kind, but on account of his being a "*righteous* man," that person shall receive "a righteous man's reward:" which seems to imply, that those who help religious people, just because they *are religious*, shall be blessed both in their soul and their body, in eternity as well as in time.

'I must not enter much more into the history, but you will like to know the end of Jeremiah. He was allowed to stay at Jerusalem with those whom the King of Babylon left there. Time will not allow me to tell you all that happened; but Jeremiah seems to have been respected, and when the people were in fear lest the King of Babylon should come again, they proposed to flee into Egypt, where they should be further out of his reach, and the king there would fight for them and protect them, as he had once conquered their land, and considered that they belonged him. So they asked Jeremiah to pray to God to direct them; and Jeremiah prayed, and God answered him. But God told them not to go, and promised if they would remain quietly in their own land they should be kept safely. However, they would not be persuaded. "No," they said, "we will flee into Egypt."

'Now, was not *that* like mocking God, to pray to Him for guidance, and then not obey His directions? It is like people who pray, "Lead me *not into temptation*, deliver me from evil," and yet

they run into places of temptation. Well, they were determined to go to Egypt, and they did, and took Jeremiah with them. God soon gave him a message for them. He told him to take stones, and put them one on another; and when the people observed him, Jeremiah said the stones were to show, that on *that* very spot the King of Babylon would build his palace! So they found they had not got beyond his reach. And it all came to pass.

‘But Jeremiah died in peace in Egypt, after prophesying the judgments that should come on all the sinful nations, and even on Babylon, which had executed God’s judgments, though not thinking it was by God’s order. Thus we see, that God can use bad people for His purposes; but they will come in for punishment, when they begin to boast of *their* might and power, and do not acknowledge themselves as instruments in God’s hands. Even God’s own people needed many reminders, and you would have thought, after they had escaped into Egypt, they would be humbled. But they were more ready to worship gods of wood and stone than the true God, and Jeremiah reminded them with his warnings, of what had happened through their sins. He told them that they had seen the trouble that had come through the wickedness of their “kings, and the *wives* of the kings,” and he added, “also *your own* wickedness, and the wickedness of *your* wives;” and he entreated

them to give up idolatry, saying, "Oh, do not this abominable thing!" But when the men found their wives preferred worshipping false gods, and liked the heathen customs, they told Jeremiah they were determined to follow them; so, after Jeremiah had warned them of the troubles that their sins would bring upon them, he left them to reap the consequences, and no doubt, when the judgments came, they thought of the prophet's words.

'Now, my friends, we close Jeremiah's history, but I think we *women* may remember his warnings. For the men of Judah were led off by their wives in many instances, and I think we see in daily life, as well as in Bible histories, that the proverb has a good deal of truth in it, which says, "A man is what a woman makes him." A man cannot always be reasoned with, still more seldom can he bear to be lectured; but he may often be advised, and won over by the good ways of a kind wife. A Christian wife may often get her husband to church by a word in season, and she may keep him from spending his money and time at the public-house, if she does her best to make his home comfortable, and have his meals ready for him. I believe God helps the wives that do their part, and who ask Him to bless their efforts. God invites you to tell Him your troubles, as He did Jeremiah. He says, "Call upon Me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not."

'Yes, dear friends, only pray to God, and you

will see what mighty things He can do, both for you and your husbands—things that you think impossible ; for He can soften the hardest heart, He can govern the worst temper, He can bend the strongest will, and He can make peace and love reign in the most unlikely places. So pray for yourselves and your husbands ; then do *your* part, and, you will see, God will do His.”

CONCLUSION.

‘I DID not touch upon many parts in the history of Jeremiah, for I was afraid to weary you ; but if you read it for yourselves in the Bible, you will find many beautiful promises to the righteous, as well as judgments for the wicked. The chapter about the Rechabites, who were teetotallers, has blessings for those who obey their earthly parents, even though their commands require present self-denial. Then, in the 23rd chapter of Jeremiah, there is a promise of the Saviour, who should come and bring salvation and hope to all nations. There are also many cheering words of the restoration of the Jews ; all which you can read for yourselves, if you like, and I hope, after what I have told you of the Book of Jeremiah, you will find the meaning open

out, as you pray for God's Holy Spirit to reveal His word to you. We must remember that it is quite possible to know the sense of a passage without its reaching the heart. The intellect may be enlightened, but the understanding may remain darkened and uninfluenced. I mean, there may be head knowledge, but no heart work. If the life is to be influenced, the heart must be set to work ; so the great point in all learning is to have it reach the heart, and *that* can be done only by God. Man can reach the head and the understanding, but only God can reach the heart : so we should always pray to Him to open our hearts, when we want Bible truths to get in there. When once God unlocks the heart by the power of His Holy Spirit, it is wonderful what an influence affects the life. The entrance of God's word gives light, and Bible scholars see new motives for action, and find fresh rules for conduct, with wonderful promises ready for all who keep the precepts ; so the sacred volume is just as different to them, as an open letter is to a sealed one. We may be glad to receive a letter, and may prize it even before we have read it ; but not till we have broken the seal, and opened it, do we know all the love it contains. So the Bible may be valued and cared for, but not till its contents enter the heart do we know all its preciousness. You know it is written by God's inspiration, and if we want to understand it, we must *ask God* to explain it.

“God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.”

‘Those lines of the poet may apply here. Perhaps you wonder whether any of the Jews, who were carried captive, came in for the blessings promised to those who were faithful to God. You may remember that God told Jeremiah some were like good figs, and others like bad figs. All would be carried away at the same time ; the good would be promoted and honoured, but the bad would be set at nought and disgraced.

‘We do not read much of the grown-up people; but there were some young people who remained faithful to God in the foreign land, and it is possible that they were children of good parents ; for boys and girls are very much as they are brought up, and Jeremiah’s instruction may have been followed by some who trained their children in the way they should go. So when Daniel grew to be a youth in Babylon, he was known for his wisdom and piety. His history is most interesting and instructive,—God’s preservation of him in the lions’ den, because he would not give up kneeling in prayer, and his high promotion to be a great man in Babylon. Then there were his three companions, the young men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who were thrown into the fiery furnace because they would not worship the king’s golden image ; but they were not even singed with the flames, and the

king promoted them, and raised them to fill the chief places of honour and power in Babylon.

‘There was also a young girl, whose parents had died, and she was brought up by her good uncle, Mordecai. At an early age, just when she was getting into a young woman, her beauty and her modesty, as well as her good conduct, brought her into notice, and the king made her his queen. You may read all about Queen Esther in the Bible, in the Book of Esther, where we are told that Mordecai, her uncle, was clothed in royal apparel, and wore the king’s ring, and was one whom “the king delighted to honour.” These were some of the good Jews who were like the good figs, and you see, that going to Babylon turned out for their honour.

‘We thus learn, my dear friends, that God can bring good out of evil, and we can never go out of God’s sight, or get beyond God’s reach. No doubt the parents mourned that their little Esther should be far away from their temple worship, and be brought up in a heathen land; and perhaps the parents of young Daniel, and those of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, felt their boys would be in danger of forgetting God in a heathen land; but we know it is not *where* we are, but *what* we are, that is the point, and though it is never right to *go* into temptation, yet if we are placed in temptation, God will make a way for us to escape, that we may *be able* to bear it, if we ask Him. Then there is a

great blessing promised to those that bear temptation without being overcome. It is no sin to be tempted, but it is a great sin to fall by following the tempter.

‘If the parents of Daniel, and Shadrach, and Meshach, and Abednego, and Esther, had lived to see them faithful to God, and honoured by man, how pleased they would have been ; and all parents should feel encouraged to train their children in the way they should go. It is not the way they will be inclined to go ; and though children think it hard to have their wills crossed, and be obliged to go to school, and keep Sunday holy, yet a blessing is sure to follow in the end.

‘I knew a mother who had a family of several daughters, but only one son, and though she wished all to be good, she had a special care for her boy. She seemed to take every possible pains with him ; she taught him at home, then she sent him to a good school, and she and his father took him regularly to church ; but of all the self-willed naughty boys, her Bob was the worst I ever met with. Some thought he was over-indulged, being an only son ; others said his mother was too particular, and his father not strict enough. It is easy to see mistakes, and to find fault, but *I* thought they did their best, and I believe God blessed their endeavours ; for when children will not heed good training, God takes them in hand. Bob enlisted, and neighbours said it was good riddance.

when he left the place. His mother followed him with her prayers, and his father, who would have liked to have had him to help on his own little farm, grieved, till his hair turned grey. People wondered at him taking it to heart. They told him that the hardships of a soldier's life might steady Bob, but when they heard he was ordered out to the Crimea, in that dreadful war, they whispered to one another that Bob would be no loss if he were killed, and he might do to be shot at, in the place of a better man.

'My friends, it was wonderful the hair-breadth escapes he had ; when he wrote home of the battles he had been in, and of the numbers that had been killed, but that he had not been hurt, people declared he was too wicked to die. They were not so heartless as to say this to his parents, who thanked God he was spared ; but among themselves, they quoted a familiar old rhyme :—

“God takes the good, too good on earth to stay,
And leaves the bad, too bad to take away.”

'Good people said, God is merciful, He is giving Bob a chance to repent : and his parents were comforted by very sobered letters, when he expressed hopes of returning home after the war, a very different character to what he went out. But though he escaped the shot and shell of battle, yet *the hard life* and exposure to all weathers in that

severe winter, told on his constitution, and poor Bob's next letter was written from the hospital at Scutari. It was on his sick bed that he then thought of his mother's instructions, and he said he felt his mother's prayers had not been in vain. His last letter expressed a hope that he should be saved, and he wrote,—

“Dear mother, though I did not like learning my Sunday texts when I was a boy, yet they are my great comfort now, and *that* one about Jesus being able to save to the *uttermost* all that go to God through Him, just keeps me from despair. It is a great comfort that Jesus ever lives to make intercession, and I know you pray for me, so I hope I shall not perish ; but I should like to have lived to prove that I do turn away from wickedness, and if you never hear again, father and you must be sure that I die

“Your repentant son, BOB.”

‘The poor mother told me, though her heart ached, yet it was lightened by this letter, and she and her husband were comforted in their sorrow, though their hair looked like the drifted snow, and they were aged before their time.

‘This is not a made-up story ; I knew both the parents and the son, and I tell it you to encourage you not to give up doing your best : for though children don't always follow the good way in their youth, yet the promise is sure, “Train up a

child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Yes, in his old age, if not before, he will think of his mother's instruction and his father's discipline, especially when example confirms both. A child cannot be expected to profit, if only taught and corrected. But if the mother can say, "Come to church with father and me," or, "Say your prayers as father does," a child will think that God's worship is a proper and important duty for grown-up people, as well as for children. Yes, and even if nothing is said, a child will learn a great deal by *seeing* the parents *knee* morning and evening. Never say your prayers in bed, unless you are ill; it looks as if you are ashamed of praying to God. Remember, though Daniel was threatened to be put in the lions' den, yet he knelt three times a-day, and this is often the only opportunity God gives us of honouring Him: so let us not lose it, for prayers said in bed are often no prayers at all, and if tempted to be ashamed of kneeling to pray, think of the hymn:—

"Ashamed of Jesus! can it be?
A mortal man ashamed of Thee!
Ashamed of Thee! whom angels praise,
Whose glories shine through endless days?

Ashamed of Jesus! Yes, I may,
When I've no guilt to wash away,
No tears to wipe, no joys to crave,
And no immortal soul to save.

Till then—nor is the boasting vain—
Till then I'll boast a Saviour slain ;
And oh, may this my portion be,
A Saviour not ashamed of me !”

‘ May this indeed be the case with each of us, my dear friends. A Saviour loved, a Saviour valued, a Saviour honoured in this life, will prove a Saviour ready to welcome us at the hour of death, and at the Day of Judgment. If we would know all He can be to us, let us seek Him now, “while He may be found ;” let us “call upon Him while He is near,” and we shall then find that His love is unspeakably great, and that He is a Friend who will never leave us nor forsake us.

‘ Now we must close, I hope I have not talked till you are tired. I must thank you for being so attentive, and the babies deserve praise, they have been so good.’



AN EARTHLY STORY WITH A HEAVENLY MEANING.

A NEW STORY.

I HAVE brought you a fresh story, said Mrs. Seaforth, as she greeted the mothers at the Mission-room ; adding, I thought it might be a pleasant change from the Scripture histories, and it will still lead our minds to the Bible, as there is a heavenly meaning to it.

Perhaps if I give you the clue to its meaning, you will more easily enter into it ; so I will first tell you that the 'earthly story' is intended to illustrate our blessed Saviour's words in Matt. vii. 13, 'Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat ; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.' When you hear the 'earthly story' you will see how few climb up the embankment to walk along the narrow way.

The 'embankment' is to show that it needs

an effort on our part to leave the world, which is called the 'Dark Valley' and where all walk after the devices and desires of their own evil hearts. It is here that Satan makes those his slaves who share the 'pleasures of sin,' and which they find last only 'for a season.'

The 'Prince' who gave His life for their redemption, is the Lord Jesus Christ, and the 'stream' where pilgrims could wash, represents His blood, which cleanses from all sin. The beautiful 'robe' provided for all is the wedding garment mentioned in Matt. xxii. 11, 12—even the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, in which the believer appears spotless before God.

The 'Guide and Comforter' is the Holy Ghost, who teaches and guides into all truth, convincing of sin, &c.

The 'house' where a feast was prepared, to which all were invited, is the House of God; and the people who grumbled at the provisions, saying, 'The meat was tough, the bread dry, and the ale sour,' represent those who go to a place of worship but have no heart for the service: so they find fault with the praying, and the preaching, and the singing, and do not enjoy anything.

'The slice from the loaf eaten at home, is a picture of those who, instead of going to a place of worship, read a chapter out of the Bible to pacify their conscience, but having no heart for it, they cannot relish it. When people enjoy their

Bibles at home, their feet soon walk to the House of God ; unless illness prevents, or such hindrances which are not of their own making.

The 'petitions' sent to the King are our prayers.

The 'nosegays' are our alms and good deeds, our praises and thanksgivings.

The 'messengers' are preachers and teachers.

Death, and the end of the righteous and the wicked, with all the other parts of the story, will be readily understood ; though, if anything is puzzling, be sure to stop me, and I shall be glad to show you the full meaning : but I think I have told you enough to prepare you, and you may prefer to find out the rest for yourselves. So now I will begin.

An Earthly Story with a Heavenly Meaning.

ONCE upon a time there was a great King, who lived in a splendid palace, surrounded with all that was grand and beautiful. It stood very high, and as He looked down into the valley below He was grieved to see the sufferings and misery of the poor people who lived there, for they were all slaves working in chains, and were hardly used by their taskmaster. The King knew them, for they were His subjects, and had once been well off ; but they rebelled against His laws, and had listened to the evil counsel of that wicked one, who, having en-

ticed them to disobey the King, now ruled over them as their taskmaster. They felt they were receiving the due reward of their disobedience, and knew that there was no escape from their bondage, unless some friend could suffer the punishment for them, and thus give them their freedom. It was true that the King was very merciful and ready to forgive ; but He was also *just* and *true*, and He would not be honoured for His justice, nor would His word be relied upon if He did not punish the wicked, and keep true to His sentence. Still, He loved them so much that He found a way to set the rebels free. He gave His only Son to suffer punishment for them ; and the Prince left the glories and splendours of the palace to live and die in that miserable place.

This dearly-beloved Son, the Prince of Peace, finished the whole work which the King gave Him to do, and it was all set down to the account of the rebels, so they were to be rewarded for it. All their misdeeds were laid to His charge, and He was punished, even till His blood was shed, on their behalf ; so freedom was declared by the King, for His own Son having suffered, there was full forgiveness, and rewards were promised to all who took the Prince's title-deeds, and went to meet the King with them as their recommendation. Some were only too glad to escape from their cruel bondage, and eagerly asked for their chains to be *loosed* ; but others did not seem to know that they

were slaves, and would not allow that their task-master was hard upon them.

The fact was, he gilded their chains, and called them ornaments ; he let them amuse themselves with vipers and snakes, which he covered with something to hide their stings ; he sweetened their poisoned food, so they tasted no unpleasantness ; and concealed the dark dungeon and fearful pit of destruction which stood at the end of the valley, and where he drove all his slaves when their life ended. They were thus kept in ignorance of the misery that awaited them, and if told of the better land, and of the good King, and the sacrifice the Prince had made in their behalf, they would not believe that they should ever get free ; and when urged to accept their liberty and leave the valley, they began to make excuse. Some said they *could* not, and others said they *would* not ; so when the Prince called, ' Follow Me,' only a few were willing to go.

This little band had hardly felt the wish to do so before their fetters were loosened, and then they began to see what a heavy chain had been weighing them down. The mighty power which broke it, lifted them above the narrow valley and put them into a path that led upward to the King's palace. They found an invisible Friend was helping them, and as they turned to look at their old dwelling they saw the serpents and their stings, lions lurking in secret places, waiting to devour, pitfalls and traps

to ensnare ; for their Friend held up his bright light, so they saw the dangers that had surrounded them, and when He said, ' Escape for thy life,' they made haste.

Now the path that led to the King's palace was so narrow it needed care in walking, but the Prince having walked along it there were His footmarks left, where it would be safe to tread ; and though He had gone before to get ready to welcome them, He had not left them to walk alone, for the Friend who had loosened their chains had come from Him to be their Guide, their Helper, their Teacher, and their Comforter. He it is who told them of the love of the Prince, and when they heard of His exceeding great kindness they said, ' We love Him, because He first loved us.'

Now the narrow way that led to the King's palace was just above the broad road which ran through the dark valley, and which ended in the bottomless pit of destruction, and it needed care in walking along, for a false step endangered a fall down the steep embankment ; but it was well lighted, for the sun shone brightly by day, and even at night the moon and stars were so brilliant that they could always see the way.

The broad road in the dark valley was in constant shade, for there was a deep cutting which almost shut out the sky, and overhanging cliffs nearly covered it, so it was very like a tunnel ; but *the slaves* were accustomed to the darkness, and

lighted lamps here and there. These, however, often misled them, and they sometimes made strange mistakes, fancying their best friends were their enemies, and often tasting bitter fruits instead of sweet ; but their greatest mistake was in supposing that they should reach the King's palace by the broad road, and they derided those who walked in the narrow way, saying, ' It will all come to the same in the end, and we shall be saved a great deal of trouble if we keep where we are, and do what we like.' So they set at nought the King's offer of freedom, and despised the love of the Prince, making much of their cruel taskmaster, who gilded fresh chains, and fastened them around, lest they should try to escape, at the same time making them believe that his gifts were more enjoyable than those the King offered.

They were often invited by those in the narrow path, and a feast was prepared by the King every week, to which all were welcomed. The taskmaster allowed his people to go if they liked, for he made them believe that if they went now and then it would entitle them to a home in the Palace at last ; so it seemed an easy way of making the best of both worlds. But when they heard it was impossible to serve two masters they chose to stay in the valley, and save themselves the trouble of climbing up the embankment to the great House, where the feast was given. It stood just by the narrow path, and a few who saw the pleasant

prospect as they approached, and tasted of the refreshment and pleasant fruits, resolved to ask for their chains to be taken off. They said, 'We are tied and bound, of Thy great mercy loose us,' and the petition brought an answer from the Prince, for the chains were cut asunder, and when the people in the narrow way entreated, 'Come with us, and we will do thee good,' they bid farewell to their friends, who returned from the feast grumbling at the entertainment, and wondering that any one should care to stay behind, and pursue the narrow path. Some declared they had taken cold from a draught, others felt the fatigue of climbing the embankment too great to attempt it again, and all found fault with the provisions. They said the bread was stale and dry, the meat hard, and the wine sour.

Their taskmaster was pleased to hear their complaints, for he was afraid of their being tempted to leave him, if they took a fancy to the entertainment. He remembered that he had lost some of his people by their going to these feasts, for the pure air had braced them, and given them an appetite for the good food; so in time they could relish nothing else, and found fault with his dainties. Knowing this, he put difficulties in the way of their going, and when the bell sounded to tell that all was ready, he suggested that it was likely to rain, or that they would get cold. He would even offer to give them a similar treat by *their own fire-side*, and as he cut off a slice, which he

assured them was off one of the king's loaves, he said he wondered they could eat anything so dry and crusty. Thus he set them against the King's Feast, and kept them from attending it as much as he could.

Those on the narrow way, having appetites prepared for it, used to look forward to the day of the Feast. They called it 'the best of all the seven,' and you might hear the words from one to another,—'I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord;' for such they named the place where the feast was held. It was here they seemed to get strength to walk afresh; it was here they were refreshed after their trials and toils; it was here they often got a sight of the King and the Prince, who told them of their Home preparing in His Palace. It was here, too, where they had fresh instructions about their daily work, and were encouraged by the King's own assurance, 'Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.' Those who were very anxious to obtain a sight of the good things in store, were allowed to look through the telescope of Faith, and the view of 'glory, honour, immortality,' with 'joy unspeakable,' so filled them with delight, that they went on their way rejoicing.

There was plenty of work to be done as they journeyed, stopping here and there on the narrow way to gather the fruits that grew on the banks; sowing seeds, for those who followed to reap;

binding sheaves of corn which some had cut down, who had already gone before. The diligent got through a great deal, but some were content with just walking on slowly, and doing very little, while their good Friend and Teacher often told them of the King's promise: 'Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.' It was a great help to them having this wise Counsellor always with them, to bring good words to their remembrance, and to remind them of the love of the King and His Son. He very often sent requests in their behalf, and taught them how to draw up petitions for themselves. At first they were content just to express their duty, and their thanks; but when they were told that the King and His Son wanted their confidence, and they need not be afraid to ask anything, they found it a constant pleasure to go as children to a Father, and feel that, for the sake of His own dear Son, every whisper was caught on the wings of the wind, and carried to the King's Throne.

By this means intercourse was kept up, and messages were sent and returned, not only morning and evening, but at all hours of the day; for every joy and every sorrow was told, and the joy was increased, and the sorrow was lightened, by the sympathy of the King and His Son. All mistakes they made in their efforts to do their duty were confessed, and the King not only forgave them, but prevented *any mischief* springing from them; advising them

to make Humility their companion, who would never venture to do anything without the aid of their great Teacher.

You have heard of the steep embankment that raised them above the dark valley, and kept them separate to the end of their journey; but that embankment was only on the side that bordered the wide road of the valley: on the other side of the narrow path was a beautiful stream, that flowed from a Fountain, which the Prince had opened Himself. Its source could never be exhausted, so the stream could never be dry. It flowed for the benefit of the Travellers; here they could wash and be clean, and as it was always within reach they could constantly have recourse to it. Were they thirsty? they could drink and be satisfied; were they weary? they could bathe and be refreshed; were they soiled with their work? they could wash and be clean. This was a blessing they so often needed, that they prized it greatly.

But that was not the only gift from the Prince, for their use and benefit. Their good Friend showed them most costly raiment, which had been prepared by the Prince for their use. Each garment had been worn by Him and bore His stamp, and it covered the individual so entirely, that it hid all imperfections; and as each accepted the gift, even the poorest felt he was 'comely, with the comeliness that was put upon him,' and he knew *that* would render him acceptable in the eyes of

the great King, when he was called to the Palace.

Now, the more the travellers thought of their gifts, and the more they washed in the pure stream, the more anxious were they to 'cleanse themselves in flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness' in thought, word, and deed. They little knew that it was their good Friend who was urging them on in this respect; but He it was who made them both to will and to do. Finding that they had no power of themselves to help themselves, they clung more closely to their Guide, and the more they learnt of Him, the less confident they were of their own powers. As they leaned on a strength greater than their own, they were kept from falling, and they had so many bright views of the glory beyond that they sometimes longed for those in the dark valley to share their enjoyment. They called to them now and then, saying, 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive all the blessedness which is revealed to those who love the King;' but those in the valley could not believe, and when the Prince Himself tried to get admittance, they would not open to His knock, or even answer the call of the good Friend and Guide, who wished to arouse them to turn out of the broad road that led to destruction.

Sometimes their attention would be arrested if they saw one of the travellers trip on the narrow

way, and such a hubbub would be made! while their taskmaster took the opportunity of telling his slaves that *they* walked much more carefully than those who had left them; and he said, he expected some day to see them all roll down the embankment. This boast grieved the poor travellers, and made them walk more carefully, lest they should 'give occasion to their enemies to speak reproachfully.' So they took special heed to their steps, and as they were pressing on toward the King's Palace, a messenger came to fetch one of them by a shorter cut.

The pilgrim was quite ready; he only fastened the beautiful garment of the King's Son more firmly round him, and with a bright smile he welcomed the angel, who carried him to the edge of the river, where the Prince Himself met him. He told him that He once lay in that river, and felt its cold chill, for that was part of the punishment inflicted on Him for the faults of the rebels; but He added, 'This river is now the pathway to glory for My people. I light it with My presence, I cheer it with My comfort:' so the pilgrim said, 'I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.' His companions tried to follow, but they could not, and the peace that seemed like a halo round him, as they caught his last look, reminded them of the words, 'Death is swallowed up in victory,' and they remembered that this great enemy was conquered by the Prince, who rose from death's

grasp on the resurrection morn, when He opened His kingdom to all believers.

So the survivors felt they could only mourn for themselves. Their loss was his gain, and they cheered each other, saying, 'Only gone before! in a little while we shall meet again;' and they set to work with extra diligence, so that when the King should send for them, they might hear Him welcome them with the words, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!'

The more they thought of the happy end of the dear departed one, the more anxious they were that their relatives in the dark valley should be urged to escape from the sad end, which awaited all that remained there. Even 'devouring fire,' and 'everlasting destruction,' and 'blackness of darkness for ever.' So they sent up a petition in their behalf to the King and His Son, who gave authority to some of His most trusty servants to visit them with offers of mercy.

The people received them ungraciously, and wondered they should be so zealous in their behalf, saying, 'We shall perhaps think of your offer when we have to meet our last enemy; for I own, said one and another, that I rather dread that enemy, Death, and I know your Prince is supposed to have conquered him.' 'He really did, and no one need fear that enemy who holds the Prince's

warrant for safety: besides, the Prince Himself comes to protect His people even from the shadow, so they rise to glory instead of sinking to misery. There is one just gathered into the kingdom, having joined the ransomed hosts, and we want you to come, and get ready for the same joy. Do turn away from this dismal place,' urged the messenger, 'or you may be fetched suddenly, as the good pilgrim was.'

They replied, 'We know all about it; one of our people went at the same time. We hope they are both safe together now.'

'There is no doubt that the pilgrim, who had washed in the stream from the Prince's fountain, is safe and happy, for he had on the clothing given him by the Prince, and he had the title-deeds all signed by the Prince, which had been acknowledged by the King. Moreover, he had used all the means to fit himself for the inheritance of the saints, so he was able to understand the language and the manners of the better country. The Great Counsellor had been his Teacher—He, who first helped him out of this valley; and He will help you if you will ask Him.'

'Well, I shall see some day, perhaps, but I think I may get on by myself; the man who left us lately so suddenly, certainly did startle some of us,' said Mr. Talkative, 'for he was almost frantic when the grim messenger would not wait while he so much as washed, and he frightened us all with

his last agonies; but the doctor gave him a soothing draught, and he was carried off in his sleep: so we hope he is at rest, poor fellow!

‘Poor fellow indeed!’ repeated the friend. ‘But it is useless to pity him, for pity will not save him from the burning pit of destruction: there he is, and there you will join him if you stay here. For that place of endless torment is prepared for your wicked taskmaster. It was never intended for *you*, but if you choose his service you must accept his wages. You may like his wages now, but you will not like the sting which follows, and the endless torment after this life is ended. The “pleasures of sin” are but for “a season,” afterwards, they “bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder.”’

‘Oh, don’t talk like that, frightening one! I’m sure the King is so kind, He would not like to let us suffer just for a few little mistakes,’ exclaimed a woman.

‘It is because He is so kind, that I would have you avail yourself of His goodness. You do not know what you lose by stopping here. You were born for better things than just scraping gold. Your taskmaster only wreathes chains with it, to fasten you to the valley. If you gave it to the King, He would use it for your happiness,’ urged the good messenger.

‘Not very likely,’ replied a toiling man, ‘seeing that some of your pilgrims never get rich, with all *their* work for Him.’

‘They may look poor, but they have great riches laid up in store; yea, “durable riches and righteousness.” Listen what one boasted that he possessed,—“Having nothing, and yet possessing all things!”’

‘It sounds very fine, but I cannot believe it is all true; if I could believe you, I would ask to be relieved from this bondage, for I am weary of it,’ sighed a sorrowful mourner.

‘Seeing is believing. Come away with me; “Ask, and it shall be given you:” only do *your* part, and the King will do *His*.’

Soon the poor woman was seen toiling up the embankment, her chains having been loosened, while the good messenger bid her God speed, and many ran to give her a helping hand with the refreshment she needed. She looked back, for her friend, instead of accompanying her, was stopping to talk to a child who accosted him, asking, ‘Please, sir, may I go too? that is my aunt who has just set off.’

‘Go, and welcome,’ was the reply, and the good Friend lifted him half up the embankment; then the boy felt his freedom, and rejoiced that he had been released from his fetters. He eagerly called to his mother, saying, ‘It is all true what I learnt at school, for here are “joys unspeakable,” and the King’s service is “perfect freedom.”’

‘Oh, wait a minute, child,’ she shouted; ‘you cannot go alone. I’ll come when I’ve done my work.’

‘I’m not alone, mother, the King has sent His Guide to take care of me; and the cruel taskmaster will catch me, and put his chains round me, if I do not make haste. Do come too, mother, for I’m going, going to the better land.’ And a lovely avenue hid the boy; but presently he threw down a handful of choice fruit, which he was allowed to gather, and the mother picked it up, bidding him stay and enjoy such good things, if that he sent her was a taste of what was growing around him.

Now the Messenger, having succeeded in getting two to leave the valley, tried to persuade others, and a poor cripple was quite willing to start, if only she could get strength to move; a petition soon brought the Good Helper to her side, and He carried her up to the narrow way, where was a couch ready for her comfort. The Messenger had a great wish to liberate some who were specially favoured by the King, for He had entrusted to them so many talents, such as health, time, money, station, and abilities, that it seemed grievous that such good things should be squandered for bad purposes, and unlawful uses, which of course they must be, as long as they were dedicated to the taskmaster, and his unprofitable employment. It was true that he allowed them a small per cent of pleasure for the capital which he said he kept for their benefit, but which he really used himself for their ruin.

It is very sad to see so many deceived, and to

find that the best gifts of the King, intended to raise the people upwards, only chained them downwards ; for few of the favoured ones could be persuaded to dedicate their talents for the King's honour, and even children, loaded with all that could be wished for, were cross with their selfishness, and instead of being thankful, they were discontented. Sometimes they were allowed to keep their gifts of health, and memory, and home, and relatives ; but often they were withdrawn, to teach them to prize the blessings left, and the loss of a gift now and then reminded them of the Giver. It was strange that they should never have thought of the King, who gave them 'all things richly to enjoy,' unless He threatened to take them away ; but this was too frequently the case, though here and there was to be seen a whole family of children, following their parents up the embankment, and along the path of peace. These soon turned their money, their time, and their talents, to the best account, dedicating all to the King's service ; so they were good examples, and they made so many friends through their wealth, and worldly advantages, that some who were won by them were taken before to welcome them into 'everlasting habitations.'

Much of the fruit, that grew along the narrow way was bought by them, and rolled down the embankment for the benefit of the slaves, who were sick and sad, while they made many schemes to

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tempt them to leave the valley, and come up higher. They sent them copies of the King's gracious message, which was full of encouragement, and the precious promises it contained were enough to fill the heart with hope, and even with joy. It is true there were fearful threatenings to those who despised counsel, and refused the King's offer of mercy ; but there were many examples of those who had experienced the King's blessings, besides those who had abused His gifts, and were cut off in their wickedness.

The first part was dated very far back, from the beginning of the world, even before the rebellion of the slaves. It related how the King had one faithful follower, in spite of the wickedness that prevailed after the general rebellion. *That* faithful man was named Abraham. He set off *alone*, to walk in the narrow way, for he loved the King so much, and believed His promise would be fulfilled of the Son coming to pay for the redemption of the slaves ; so Abraham's freedom was given him in anticipation of that happy event, and he killed a lamb as a reminder of it, and as a proof that he wanted to share in the blessings, which the Prince would give when He shed His blood. The King called Abraham His '*Friend*,' and all Abraham's descendants were specially blessed and watched over. Their whole history was written in the first part of the book, and prophecies about them, with sweet Psalms, and real

stories of the people who had lived and died, filled what was called the Old Testament. It seemed specially addressed to faithful Abraham's descendants ; but after the coming of the Prince, who lived and died for the redemption of the whole world, a New Testament was added to the Old. You know a testament means an agreement or a will, and this was the agreement or final settlement. It was in fact the will of the Prince, and sealed and signed by His special signature. It opened the Old Testament promises to all who had the *faith* of Abraham, whether they were descended from him or not, and it repeated and multiplied the blessings ; so that if people did not read the Old Testament, they could find salvation in the New. Thus, one was independent of the other, though the New unfolded the Old ; and both being on one and the same subject, and having the same end in view, were at last bound in one volume, and called THE Book, or the Bible, to show it was above all other books, seeing it was indited by the King of kings.

Now it was thought, that though people despised messengers, they might be inclined to consider the message ; if they would not *hear*, they might *read* of the blessings the King offered of His mercy, and of the love of the Prince, who had given His life for their redemption, and whose beautiful history of doing good was written in the Book, as also the account of His cruel death, all for the sake of the

rebels, that 'whosoever believed in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' Then there were warnings, such as 'Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;' and there were rules of the new life, and directions given to the narrow way which led to happiness.

But there was far more than I have time to record of the contents of this blessed Book; suffice it to say, that the most diligent student and the most learned scholar never got to know it all, though even a little child could learn enough to grow 'wise unto salvation,' and even the feeblest intellect could catch the key-note of the King's love, which sounded through its pages, and said, 'Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'

Knowing that good news is the best remedy for heart sickness, it was no wonder that all on the narrow way who could afford to buy copies of this Book did so, hoping to cheer the poor slaves in the valley, and make them wish to embrace the offers of mercy; but though they picked them up as they were rolled down the embankment, the Books were not always valued for their contents. Some would even boast that they already possessed several copies, which they kept either hid in a box or on a top-shelf out of harm's way. One man declared he had seven copies; some had belonged to his parents, two were given him, and he had purchased one, being attracted by the

binding, and he thought it looked respectable to have a well-bound Bible. He greatly admired the outside, but never cared to read the inside ; so, not knowing its important contents, he could not be persuaded either to give or lend one of his spare copies to those who had none.

Such a possession would therefore rise in judgment against him at the last day : for if he would not read the offers of mercy from the King, of course it showed he despised them ; if he would not trace the path that led to life, he could not expect to walk in it ; if he would not read of the rules and regulations of the King, he could not be expected to keep the laws of the Kingdom ; if he never read the promises, he could have no desire to inherit them. No wonder that he looked upon pilgrims as enthusiasts, and spoke sneeringly of the King's gifts ; forgetting that rain and sunshine, seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, with health and intellect, were all graciously bestowed by the King, alike on the evil and the good. Each was a call to praise the Giver, but it was not easy for any one to offer praise, who had not first learnt out of the Book of books ; and it was grievous to think how such despisers of blessings, were 'heaping to themselves wrath, against the day of wrath.'

The more the pilgrims valued their blessings as they walked along the narrow way, the more they tried to reclaim the slaves. The rich used even

their titled names to sanction efforts ; and this was of great use, for the cruel taskmaster felt honoured by the notice of the honourable, while many who refused the letters of the King paid attention to a noble lord or lady. Indeed, it was thought that if all the nobility had been on the King's side, the valley would have been swept clean of pollutions, and that every one would have been persuaded, either by gifts or entreaties, to enter the narrow way, and follow the leaders.

But 'not *many* mighty, not *many* noble,' chose the King's service ; most of them preferred the slavery of the taskmaster, who helped them to carry their bags of gold, and paved the roads with silver, so that both themselves and their servants were endangered as they hurried along its slippery surface.

Now and then one fell, and almost rolled into the burning pit of destruction, when the Prince, out of pity, would blow a loud horn, and try to make His voice heard ; but none would heed, so He turned away, saying, 'Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out mine hand, but no man regarded, I will also laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh : when your fear cometh as desolation, and when destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you, then shall they call, but I will not answer ; they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me, for that they

hated knowledge : they would none of My counsel, they despised all My reproof ; therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.' So they were left to prosper in their wickedness, and the door of mercy was shut against them.

The call, however, that these had despised was answered by a few poor ones, who had picked up some of the books that had been rolled down the embankment. They had opened and read, 'Seek ye the Lord, while He may be found ; call ye upon Him, while He is near ;' and pondering as to how they should make request, the voice which spoke to the others startled them, and without waiting to make a formal petition, they eagerly cried, 'Lord, save *me* !' The next moment they were lifted out of the valley, and found the promise fulfilled, 'While they are yet speaking I will hear ;' for they were saved, like 'a brand plucked out of the burning,' and found themselves helped into the narrow path by pilgrims who were waiting to welcome them.

Thus the little flock increased, and the words of the Book seemed possible of fulfilment, that the ransomed ones, though easily counted as they joined the ranks, yet hereafter shall be 'a great multitude which no man can number.' Oh, what a gathering will that be when the redeemed will be welcomed by the King ! 'everlasting joy will be upon their heads, they will obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing will flee away !'

‘We speak of the realms of the blest,
That country so bright and so fair ;
And oft are its glories confessed,
But what must it be to be *there* ?’

The anticipation of this glorious future quite made up for the trials and difficulties of the way ; indeed, such things as bearing reproaches, suffering affliction, losses and crosses, were looked upon as trifles to be got through, and they not only ‘patiently endured,’ but some even rejoiced that they were ‘counted worthy to suffer.’ It astonished others to see how cheerfully these could sing the praises of their King and His Son while in the midst of trials in mind, body, and estate, but the King sent special support to sustain them ; ‘underneath were the Everlasting Arms ;’ while the Comforter whispered, ‘Your light affliction worketh for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ;’ and those who took up the telescope of faith to look beyond, saw the King holding the balances, and in one scale the sufferings put in it were borne up by so much patience, that glory after glory was heaped up on the opposite scale to weigh it down, and then was explained the earthly enigma of tribulation being the special gift for those whom the King delighted to honour. The reward was to be a pleasant surprise when the King brought all to His palace.

Some sufferers had very little glory in their

balance, for they complained so much of the weight of sorrow that impatience jerked away the scale, and prevented a great reward. Those who seemed in the greatest danger of losing their way, and also their chance of the kingdom, were some who had once been ill, but were restored. It was grievous that renewed health, or change from poverty to abundance, or exaltation to rank and influence, should shade the eyes of some from the better land; but too often they turned aside, and offered to barter their blessings to the cruel taskmaster for the 'lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life.' Thus, abusing the King's gifts, instead of using them, they were caught in a snare, and fell headlong down the embankment, where the taskmaster chained them, and they were left to suffer the 'vengeance of eternal fire.'

There were others equally well off who put all they had into the King's service, and the love that constrained them made them feel it a pleasure that they had something to offer. These, while spending all for the glory and honour of the King and His Son, were amazed to hear, that though their gifts were accepted and made useful to others, they were not lost to the owner, but were laid by in store, accumulating interest; for the King's bank was the safest place for riches, which received usury far exceeding any ordinary calculation, and affection *having* stamped the mark on little things,

it was often supposed that the largest shareholders were the penny depositors.

The people in the valley were often asked to join, and they were ashamed to decline, lest they should lose credit with those around them; but they never parted with more than they could help, as they considered it a dead loss, having no faith in the interest promised. Some ventured to invest large sums, for their taskmaster advised them to do so, when he saw earthly gain pretty sure; but the King only put *that* coin in His bank, which bore the stamp of *love*: so, having declared this, he was forced either to return the money otherwise marked, or to offer an equivalent in worldly praise, titles, honour, respect, or a colossal monument. Some gratefully received their pence and shillings again, but others preferred their money being used, and their name in print was a reward to many, declaring their respectability; while to those who gave out of their abundance, a marble record would blaze on their liberality to ages yet unborn, and ensure them honourable distinction as long as they lived. Yes, they had their reward in *time*: but not in *eternity*, for the everlasting rewards were kept for the faithful, who gave not only liberally, but heartily, and even 'hoping for nothing again,' but merely from love to the King.

It was to such as these that the gifts of others were often entrusted, and thus many a grudging

shilling and sixpence, a vain half-sovereign, and pompous five-pound note, were all turned into the service of the King, and made not only to do good, but he who used them was rewarded for his trouble; so the disdained collector, and the philanthropic dispenser, had their names entered in the King's bank-book, and the money they collected and turned to good account was reckoned by the King as theirs, to be returned with usury.

Now, while the King kept the principal of all that was paid, bearing the stamp of love, and added interest to it, He also gave liberally to all who asked; and even those who only ventured to look to Him received grace sufficient, while flowers for pleasure, fruit for refreshment, and herbs for medicine, were to be found growing by the narrow path, so that all who walked along had their need supplied. It was strange the King's gifts were not availed of as much as might have been expected, seeing they were planted by the good Guide, who constantly watered them. One Pilgrim, named Fear, often longed to gather a spray of the bright little flower, called *Joy*, but was afraid to venture to touch it, though the King had had a special notice put up declaring, 'Ask and receive, that your joy may be full.'

The querulous and complaining often felt that a sprig of Peace would be worth any money; but though the Prince had a board over this plant, on which was written, 'Peace, I leave with you, My

peace I give unto you ;' yet, having married into the Doubt family, they said it was not intended for any but the Strong-Faiths, and the Querulous and Doubtfuls were only distantly connected with the *Weak-Faiths*, who indeed hardly deigned to notice them, or allow that they even knew them. The flower that every one prized was one that grew most luxuriantly; it was called Love, or Christian Charity, and so many took cuttings from it that it might be seen growing in all directions, and in most unlikely corners, where Joy and Peace could not thrive: even the Fears and Doubts would venture to gather a blossom of *Love*, and a root was sometimes thrown down the embankment, hoping the poor slaves would plant it for their use.

The pilgrims of the Hopeful and Strong-Faith families sometimes sent a bouquet to their Prince, asking Him to present it to His Father, the King; and the King said He was more pleased with it than with the most costly incense, for He smelt the sweet savour of His own planting, and the Prince begged them to send more. So Fear and Little-Faith asked Courage to help them, and Strong-Faith added a large spray of Firm-Belief; and *that*, with the little buds of Gentleness, Goodness, Humility, and Charity, received a special acknowledgment from the King: for He liked to encourage what was 'lovely and of good report.'

It was wonderful the delight the pilgrims' nose-

gays gave to the King and His Son. Though the roots were originally from the King, yet they seemed like fresh gifts to Him when gratitude offered them; and having planted the same kind in the dark valley, which had all lost their beauty in the poisonous atmosphere, the King and the Prince were specially pleased to see that those in the narrow way had retained their purity and their sweet scent.

Love was the favourite flower, that climbed with *Peace* round the bowers where the pilgrims rested, and even the tiniest bud exhaled a sweet perfume: but directly a cutting took root in the dark valley its purity was gone, there was an end to the beauty and perfume; for it never bloomed, and though it got acclimatized, and was kept alive, yet *Love* was changed to Idolatry, and Selfishness and Jealousy were off-shoots.

Peace also, that sweet creeper that twined round *Love*, quite lost its delicate blossom, and was rather ugly than pretty, having sown seeds of Sulks and Obstinacy. However, they were approved for fiery tempers by some Mrs. Fly-ups and Speak-outs, as a sedative for their servants, and were advertised, when made into pills, as having a wonderful effect in keeping peace in a household. Obadiah Obstinate declared that he had made them himself from the herb *Peace*, which came from the better country; but he did not say that its nature was changed by the different

climate, so people were deceived, and real *Peace* was not known below.

The other plants, such as *Long-suffering*, *Gentleness*, *Goodness*, *Meekness*, *Temperance*, would not live in the bad atmosphere ; so the taskmaster, wishing to have the best he could in their place, planted *Wrath*, *Strife*, *Revellings*, *Drunkenness*, and *Improprieties*, which grew to trees of such abominations, that those who sat under them often turned faint with the shocking odour. This alarmed some who had been gathering what they thought a bunch of *Innocent Mirth*, and found it was polluted by a slimy pool, where it had become too objectionable for refined sensibility, and fearing it would grow up to a poisonous tree of *Guilt*, the owner had the courage to have it cut down. Losing its shade, she looked up, and caught sight of the arbour on the top of the embankment. Trying to step upward, the chain galled, but a cry for help broke the fetters, and the unseen Hand which set her free lifted her upwards, where *Sympathy* sprang to give a welcome, and cordials of loving-kindness soon revived her spirits.

The tired pilgrim would gladly have rested in that enchanted bower, which *Peace* and *Love* had covered with their leaves and flowers ; but the King's voice called, and the herald who blew the trumpet announcing His advent, at the same time dropped a lighted match in the valley below, which ignited the wood, hay, stubble, and all the

dry, withering trees ; so a fearful conflagration ensued, and the people remembered that the King had warned them that the valley, and the works therein, should be burnt up. It was too late to escape ; the slaves could not see the way up the embankment, for the smoke hid all from view, and the dead and living were at last swept into the burning pit of destruction, where their taskmaster joined them, and whence the cries of their torment rose up for ever and ever !

Oh, how different was the fate of those who were ready to welcome the King ! even the poor woman who had only just escaped from the valley, and had hardly rested after washing, was clothed in the wedding garment, and tried to chime in with the rest in singing His praise. Her grateful heart gave tune to her voice, and when the Prince saw her He knew she was one who, having been much forgiven, loved much : so He included her with all His faithful ones when He said, ‘Come, ye children of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you.’ All followed with shoutings, and glad hallelujahs joined the songs of cherubim and seraphim. The books were not yet opened, nor the rewards given—*that* was to follow ; but the poor pilgrims felt their warfare was over, and they could rest. They had ‘fought the fight,’ they had ‘finished their course,’ they had ‘kept the faith,’ and they were saved, pardoned, justified, sanctified, and glorified.

What more can be wanted to perfect their happiness? Fulness of joy is their portion, pleasures at the King's right hand for evermore they now understand.

But hark ! the prizes are to be given ! Crowns, and some with splendid gems, sparkle, golden glory of various weights, are to be portioned out, that every one may be rewarded according to their works.

The wicked, too, will have their final doom pronounced, and the unprofitable servant will be cast into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 'Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father,' and with adoring gratitude bow themselves before the Prince, who was slain and had redeemed them by His blood, saying, 'Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne !'

Reader, where will you be in that day ? Your life now will decide your future. Time is given to prepare for eternity ; are you getting ready for heaven or hell ? Are you walking on the broad road that leads to destruction ? Happy will it be if you have turned out of it, for though the narrow path is one that requires effort, yet joys attend it, and glory crowns it.

SUNDAYS IN THE SICK-ROOM.

'I am shut up; I cannot go into the house of the Lord.'

Jer. xxxvi. 5.

How many there are who echo the above words of the Prophet Jeremiah! To such, the following pages are addressed, with the hope that 'she who tarries at home may divide the spoil.' Yes, dear friends, suffering in body or mind, unable to join with 'the multitude who keep holy day,' to you I send a little reminder of that Heavenly Love, which is 'from everlasting to everlasting.' Though deprived of ordinances, yet the God of ordinances can make your room a Bethel—the 'gate of heaven;' yea, He Himself can be to you a 'little Sanctuary,' giving you a 'little reviving;' and if HE shut you in, as He did Noah in the Ark, you will be as safe as His servant Noah.

There are times when, as old Herbert quaintly says, 'God takes the text and preaches patience.' Too weak for more than a single verse, we can only lie still, and meditate upon it, hushed to peace, and perhaps to slumber, by the songs which

the Lord giveth His own. At other times, invalid may be equal to a little reading, and the portions of scripture selected, with a few simple thoughts in prose and verse, may be an acceptable variety, requiring no mental effort, and yet dissolving the monotony of one subject treated in any way.

It pleases God to make use of even the 'worldly things' of this world. May these simple words echo His midnight harmonies, and be used by the Holy Spirit as channels for Divine consolation. May the blessed Saviour, who was once the 'Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,' accept this little offering, as a cup of cold water to refresh the poor afflicted ones ! May He speak through the pages of His own precious love and sympathy, assuring that 'whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth

‘PATIENT IN TRIBULATION.’

Patient in tribulation

Let me be.

But what *is* tribulation ?

Let me see.



The storm of persecution
Can it be ?
The dangerous temptation
Waiting me ?

A loss by sad bereavement,
Is it so ?
Long farewell, the chastisement,
This is woe.

Bitter draughts of privation
Is the share.
Loss of wealth and of station
Some may bear.

Pain and suffering of sickness
Near to die,
Wearing away in weakness,
One may lie.

Life one episode of care
Day by day,
Nothing to relieve but prayer—
A rough way.

Ah, this is tribulation !
Sad indeed !
Think of the consolation
In your need.

Autumn brings the harvest ripe—
Golden sight !
Grasp the sickle as a type,
Heaven's light.

Take the lessons I would show ;
Hold the glass ;
Bring from heaven to earth below
A compass.

Remember, tribulation
Is the text ;
Patience as consolation
Now see next.

Harvest pictures o'er again,
As before ;
Losses ever proving gain,
More and more.

Patience bears the heavy flail,
Looks above ;
Knows that blessing will prevail—
God is love.

Patience watches every blow,
Feels the smart,
Bears up bravely, all well know
Husk must part.

But oh, then, behold the weight
Of the grain !
Chaff all gone, the corn first-rate,
Loss was gain.

Patience bore the spirit up,
Strength came down,
Mercy mingled every cup,
Gave the crown.

Then, after tribulation,
There appears
All the joy and consolation—
No more tears.

Patience now is perfected
By the Lord,
Who first made us troubled
By His Word.

That He might our sins thus sever
With a cross,
Tribulation left us never
Without loss.

Loss of wealth, patiently borne,
Gains far more ;
Though we are sadly forlorn,
We've a store.

Sickness, weakness, patiently met,
Leads to health ;
God's flails, He pleases to let
Out for wealth.

Adding store, still increasing,
Making joy.
Patient now, and ever waiting,
No alloy.

Finding joy in all we do,
So 'twill be ;
Ever forward to pursue
Felicity.

Then every bitter cup
Will be dry,
Patience helped to drink all up
With a sigh.

Tribulation is now past,
Grief is o'er ;
Patience's trial does not last
Evermore.

Now the palm-branch waveth high,
Tune your voice,
Victory shout through the sky—
I'll rejoice.

Patience perfected above,
No more pain;
Death is o'er and all is love—
Loss was gain !

‘TRIBULATION WORKETH PATIENCE.’

Tribulation worketh patience,
Like the needle with the thread ;
Let this now appeal to conscience,
Answer without doubt or dread.

Does our trial with its sorrow,
Piercing as with needle's skill,
Work the pattern we may borrow,
And our daily task fulfil ?

Blessed copy ! set before us
By our Saviour's life and death ;
Tribulation was the chorus
Of His first and latest breath.

Lying in the humble manger,
Early He was taught to bear ;
In this world He was a stranger,
Tribulation was His share.

Holy Spirit, teach Thy servant,
So to copy Christ, my Lord,
That, with humble life and fervent,
Life with His may well accord.

CHAPTER I.

PRAYER.

O LORD, our heavenly Father, who dost chastise those whom Thou dost love, teach me to profit by Thy chastisements, and though deprived of public ordinances, still grant me a share of Thy blessings. O Holy Spirit, be Thou my Teacher, and take of the things of Christ, and show them to me. O Lord Jesus Christ, make me feel Thy preciousness,

and assure me that Thou wilt pardon and cleanse me.

O blessed and triune God, work in me to will and to do ; give me grace to bear cheerfully and to suffer patiently, not only pain and weakness, but whatever may befall me. Let Thy grace come to me in every need, that I may be upheld when flesh and heart fail. Bless all who are dear to me, all who have been kind to me, all who have asked my prayers, and all who are now worshipping in Thy house. Open all our hearts to receive Thy divine truths, O Lord ; and now that I am about to read Thy holy Word, make me profit, that I may learn to do Thy will, and walk in Thy way. For the sake of my blessed, Redeemer I pray to be heard, and answered as is best for me, and in His Name I would sum up all my petitions for myself and others, in the words He has graciously taught, saying, ' Our Father,' &c.

Scripture portions to be read.

Deut. viii. Ps. xxv. John, xiv.

Prayer in Scripture words.

Lead me in Thy truth, and teach me.' Ps. xxv. 5.

What need have we to say, ' Lord, teach me to pray,' for how often it may be said to us, ' Ye know not what ye ask !'

The prayer, ' Lead me, O Lord,' implies that

we are prepared to follow, when God opens the way. Like Peter we feel, 'Lord, I am ready to follow Thee, both to prison and to death ;' but like him, also, a feeble voice may startle us, and not only may we halt, but in alarm we may turn aside, rather than face danger, as did Peter when accosted by a maid.

Before praying, 'Lead me, O Lord,' it will be well to think what the answer may entail ; so we should pray, 'Lord, make me willing to be led ;' for too often in the glow of zeal and love we fancy our faith is equal to any test, and we think that, if led by God, we shall only be taken along ways of pleasantness and paths of peace. But God's way is often 'in the sea, and His pathway in deep waters.' He leads through tracks hitherto unknown, through 'the waste howling wilderness, where are fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought.' Weak faith stands back in alarm, till reminded that having prayed, 'Lord, lead me,' the duty is to follow ; and the weak, trembling believer, clings to an unseen Power, hardly understanding that the answer to prayer should be so different to what was expected.

'I thought I should be led to some new sphere of labour, and be taught by a gospel ministry ; but I am laid aside by illness, out of reach of public ordinances ; can this be the right way ? Is it thus the Lord is answering my prayer, "Lead me and teach me ?"' asks the doubting invalid.

I reply : Yes, God is answering the prayer by leading where faith is being tried and strengthened, where pride is humbled, and where one who had wished to do much is learning to submit to do nothing.

God's will must first be learnt to be loved, before lessons of experience can be taught. Humility must take root downwards, before holy fruits can grow upwards.

Dear reader, what lesson are you learning ? Is it to give up the work that you had set your heart upon ? Is it to lie still, when you long to be up and doing ? Is it to refrain from teaching, when the heart is prompting, and scholars are waiting ? If the pillar of cloud stands over, it is best to wait patiently ; but if it moves on, then it is right to follow, even though the Red Sea may be the only path ; and having prayed, 'Lead me, O Lord, and teach me,' we need not doubt that the Everlasting Arms will be underneath to lift over difficulties. 'Leaning on the Beloved,' we shall come up from the wilderness, acknowledging that '*all* the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth.' How different does trial become when we see the Lord's hand guiding us along the chequered way ! The cherished scheme may be set aside, robust health may be changed for sickness, the hopes of years may be crushed, and we may find the path of tribulation the direct way to the kingdom. Let us, however, *trust* and not be afraid, for having prayed, 'Lead

me, O Lord,' we shall not be left to walk alone. God's presence will go with us ; He Himself will be our God, and we need fear nothing while we keep by His side. Danger lies in staying behind, turning aside, or running before. No harm can come while following our Divine Guide ; so,

'When we cannot see our way,
Let us trust and still obey ;
He who bids us forward go,
Cannot fail the way to show.'

Let us, therefore, fear no evil, but be cheered by God's promise,—'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee ; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee : when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned ; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour.' (Isa. xliii. 2.)

Promise.

'I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not ; I will lead them in paths that they have not known : I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.' (Isa. xlii. 16.)

THE TEACHER TAUGHT.

A True Story.

‘ Please take my class,’ a teacher said,
When ill she lay upon her bed ;
A valued, kind, true Christian friend
Had called, and offered aught to lend.
‘ Your class? Oh, no, I cannot teach ;
The children’s minds I ne’er could reach.
Do ask, dear friend, another thing,
For any trifle I would bring.’
The sick one sighed at this reply,
And almost seemed prepared to cry,
But wished to offer what was best,
So paused, then urged her first request.
‘ I’m much obliged—I’ve all I need—
But if you’d be a friend indeed,
Just take my place on Sunday next,
And tell my class to learn this text,—
“ Lead me, O Lord, and teach Thou me.”
I’m learning it, and hope to be
Taught by my God to love His will,
And all His wishes to fulfil.
I fear I never shall get well,
And there is much I long to tell
To that fresh girl, poor Mary Wild,
A wayward, quick, unruly child !

I fear she will forget and spoil,
So all the trouble and the toil
Will go for nought, if no kind friend
A helping hand will try to lend.

I know the Lord can reach her heart,
But looks for us to do our part.
I hardly like again to ask,
You seem so much against the task.'

The friend replied, 'I'll do my best,
And to the Lord we'll leave the rest ;
I know I need not be afraid,
For God is sure to be my aid.'

'Oh, thank you, dear !' the sick one said.
Then knelt the other by the bed,
While up to Heaven a prayer was sent,
That God would bless the chastisement ;

And teach the teachers and the school,
That all might love the Saviour's rule,
Praying, 'O Lord, Thy will be done,
May now Thy kingdom be begun.'

Prayer soothed the teacher on her bed,
It sent her friend to school instead,
It made the little wayward child
First sad, then thoughtful, meek and mild.

For when she asked, 'Is teacher dead,
That you are come to school instead ?'
She paused to hear the quick reply—
'Twas, 'No, dear girl, you need not cry.

Your Teacher is not well to-day,
And that is why she is away ;
But she has bid me teach you all
To love the Lord, and on Him call.'

When Mary heard about the verse
She promised not to be perverse,
But check herself that very day,
And put her folly far away.

And after school to church she went,
With something on her mind intent ;
Then home, and to her mother said,
'Teacher is very ill in bed.

I'll go to Sunday-school no more :
It won't be as it was before.
I cannot bear Miss Dee instead,
It makes me think that teacher's dead.

I'll stay at home and learn her text.
I wonder what would please her next ?'
She paused, and wished a way to find
To prove she was of better mind.

The mother therefore did her part
To press the subject on her heart,
And said, 'Dear girl, she'd like the best
To hear you were with all the rest.'

'Oh, mother, I can't bear to go,
And see a teacher I don't know.
I wish I'd never been so gay,
So rude I was last Sabbath-day'

'I'm glad you're sorry for your sin ;
Now pray and try to fresh begin.
Just say those words, " Lord, teach Thou me,"
And God will then your Teacher be.'

'How will He teach me? Mother, say :
Will He begin to teach to-day?
I've said those words of teacher's text,
But know not what to do the next.'

'Dear child, just listen to God's voice,
And when He calls you make your choice ;
Then follow wheresoe'er He leads,
Eat of the pasture where He feeds.'

'Yes, that is what in school we learn,
How we from sin should always turn,
And walk beside the Shepherd true,
Along green pastures wet with dew ;

And learn to walk in wisdom's way,
And keep God's holy Sabbath day ;
But how can I now learn His will,
When teacher is in bed so ill ?'

'Your teacher's prayer may help you now,
To God's Almighty will to bow,
And make you lay your will aside,
Curbing your temper and your pride.'

'What is God's will? I cannot tell ;
I'd follow if I knew it well.
I wish He'd show me plain to-day,
What I should do, and lead the way.

' Well, Mary dear, it's plain to see,
That you should learn from good Miss Dee :
God's will has laid your teacher by,
And this may make us heave a sigh.

But when we're sure that God knows best,
We ought to wait and leave the rest,
Believing that He will fulfil
His word to those who do His will.'

' I never thought God's will would be
To take my teacher now from me,
When I had quite made up my mind
To leave my wayward will behind.'

' You thought you had ; but, Mary dear,
Your will was selfish still, I fear :
You may have said, " God's will be done,"
As taught God's blessed only Son.

But trial shows, we little know
The lurking evil here below ;
It brings what's hidden to the light,
We view ourselves as in God's sight.

And God would teach you now, my child,
Like gentle Jesus to be mild,
While, looking up to God above,
You'll learn that all His will is love.'

' I'll try, and teacher's prayer I'll say.
I'll go to school again to-day,
Perhaps the Lord will tell Miss Dee
The truths He wishes to teach me.'

And Mary Wild sat in the class—
You'll guess what shortly came to pass ;
For what I write, I'm glad to say,
Is better things began that day.

Instead of being wayward, wild,
The girl became a thoughtful child,
And grew a maiden, all could see,
From pride and evil passions free.

Her teacher never taught again,
But heard of Mary now and then,
Who grew in stature and in grace,
With pleasing form and happy face.

'Twas easy then a place to find,
With people who were good and kind,
And Mary proved a servant-maid
Who all their kindness well repaid.

She learnt God's will in many ways ;
She often turned her prayers to praise :
Her teacher also found God's will
Was sometimes learnt by lying still.

Thus they who act, as well as pray,
Will find God teaches day by day ;
And all who are divinely taught,
See wondrous things by God are wrought.

CHAPTER II.

PRAYER.

‘O GOD, who despisest not the sighings of a contrite heart, nor the desires of such as be sorrowful,’ mercifully look upon me in my affliction ; for the sake of my blessed Saviour, forgive all my sin, and turn from me all those evils which I deserved. ‘Pitifully behold the sorrows of my heart,’ and wipe away my tears with the precious consolations of Thy Holy Spirit. ‘In all times of tribulation, good Lord deliver me.’ Send me special help, and strengthen me to bear all that Thou seest good that I should suffer, either in mind, body, or estate. Grant me patience under this trial that keeps me from public worship, and in Thy own time give me a happy deliverance out of all my afflictions.

Bless all my relatives and friends, especially those who minister to my wants, and are tried with me. Bless the doctor, and give him skill, and a right judgment, that his remedies may be of use; and help us all to wait patiently, and to be satisfied with the results, even if they only teach us submission to Thy Almighty will. Cheer us all with

a Sabbath blessing, and grant us a foretaste of that perfect rest which is prepared by our Lord and Saviour for all who love Him. Increase my love, and faith, and patience, and do exceeding more than I can ask or think, O my Heavenly Father, for the sake of Thine only Son, Jesus Christ my Redeemer. Amen. 'Our Father,' &c.

Scripture portions to be read.

Isa. xxv. Ps. cxxvi. Rev. vii. 9-17 inclusive.

Promise.

'God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.' (Rev. xxi. 4.)

Last Sunday's thoughts were directed to a *prayer*, to-day we will dwell upon a *promise*, and a very precious promise is the one before us; for in this vale of tears, it is cheering to look beyond the present to that land where there will be no sorrow, and no crying.

Tears are the natural expression of deep emotions, and though they sometimes are the effect of intense joy, they usually speak of sorrow, and as such we accept and interpret them.

In this world of sin, bereavement, pain, and

grief, there are constant causes for weeping, and we will notice some, that we may anticipate the joy of tears being wiped away.

There is so much to touch the sensitive nerves, that weeping often endures. It may be that *sin* is the cause; for, like David, there are times when his words express our own feelings,—‘My iniquities have taken such hold upon me, that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head, and my heart faileth;’ for even when the Holy Spirit has convinced us of sin, in order that we may prize the Saviour, who cleanseth from all sin, Satan often hides Him from our view, and we do not always rejoice in the forgiveness of sins, or fully believe in it: but in Heaven we shall realize that ‘Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.’

Or it may be that *bereavement* has opened the fountain of our tears, and we mourn for the loss on earth. The aching void makes such a blank in our existence, and though we try to say, ‘The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord,’ yet the heart knoweth its own bitterness, and nature’s tears shed the tribute of affection to the dear departed.

Or again, physical *pain* may be such as to call forth tears; for some bodily suffering is so intense, that the sick-bed is watered with tears. A poor woman once said, ‘I bury my face in my pillow to

hide my weeping eyes, and when the pain is extra sharp I bite the pillow, lest I should scream out.' Such tears are not the fretful expression of weak and irritated nerves, which are called forth for every trifle, but are the expression of real agony ; and to be reminded at such times of the land where there will be no more pain, a Home prepared by the suffering Saviour for all who love Him, almost takes the poor sufferer from himself, and reminds of tears for ever wiped away. The present light affliction seems to lose its intensity, when compared, by the eye of faith, to the weight of glory in the future ; and to bear patiently, cheerfully, and submissively, becomes the increased desire and constant endeavour, which prayer calls forth Almighty strength to perfect.

Or, tears may express wounded feelings, bitter disappointment, loss of home, and money. Though the friendless have always One to whom they can look, Almighty to help and protect, One full of compassion ; yet there are times when the desolate invalid feels so lonely and distressed, that, weeping in solitary grief over lost friendship, shattered hopes, and crushed prospects, the dimmed eye can hardly discern that land where all these things are of the past, and joy reigns supreme. How cheering is the prospect when faith enables us to see all former things passed away, and the fountain of tears dried by Him, who sympathises with us here below, and even now bids us 'weep not,' for soon

shall every grief be over, and the days of mourning shall be ended !

Those who patiently endure to the end shall be saved by Him, who died to redeem His people from sin and from sorrow. 'They who believe He is precious,' and His consolations are neither few nor small.

THE SERVANT AND HER TEXT

A Fact.

'I've brought my book ; but, mistress dear,
You're far too ill to help, I fear :
I wish I were a scholar grown,
Like many round that I have known.'

The mistress oft God's truth had taught,
And now she spoke just as she thought ;
She tried to cheer her maid that day,
Though little she had strength to say.

'You do your best, so never mind ;
You will not always be behind,
If you will only persevere :
Now read this verse, and I will hear.'

Good Ellen read as she was told—
The words to some are very old;
They make poor sinners look above,
Where all is light, and all is love.

For Ellen read about that day
When God shall wipe all tears away,
When pain and sorrow will be o'er,
And joy will last for evermore.

'Please, let me read it once again;
'Twill be a comfort now and then,
If I can keep it in my mind—
I'll mark it, just the place to find.

Then, when I cannot read to you,
I'll practise this, and learn it too.'
'Yes, do,' her mistress faintly said;
'It comforts me upon my bed.'

Months passed, and Ellen went away;
She left her place at home to stay,
For there was sickness all about,
And Ellen's mother was not stout.

'Twas plain her mother needed rest,
So it was thought to be the best
For Ellen to go home and stay,
'Till signs of illness passed away.

Her mother soon got strong and well,
But neighbours had a tale to tell
Of sickness, sorrow, and of death,
Till Ellen wept, and held her breath.

‘I’ll just go in, I nought can do,
But I am sorry for poor Sue ;
She once worked with me at the mill,
I’m grieved to think that she is ill.’

So Ellen went and tried to cheer,
Though she was very full of fear ;
And thinking that poor Sue would die,
The girl at last began to cry.

‘Oh, dear,’ she said, ‘I did not mean,
That you should now my tears have seen.’
She tried to think what next to say,
A heavy burden on her lay,

And nought would come but sighs and tears ;
At last, as if to stop her fears,
She said, ‘God turns the night to day,
And all our tears He’ll wipe away ;’

Then bid good-bye, and kissed her friend.
‘If you should want me, mind you send.’
So saying, Ellen went away,
But she was fetched before next day.

For as she slept in bed that night
A gentle knock, and then a light,
Awoke her, and a voice she knew,
Said, ‘Ellen, please, Sue’s sent for you.’

She hurried on her dress and went,
Before the night had half been spent ;
Sue welcomed her, and said, ‘Come near,
Tell me that God will wipe each tear.

I used to go to Sunday-school,
I tried to love the Saviour's rule ;
Oh, will He let me enter in,
Where there is no more grief or sin ?

Just say the words you said before :
Mother has searched the Bible o'er,
But could not tell what place to look,
Though here's the blessed, holy Book.

You have it in your mind, I know,
It's comfort I have longed for so.'
Then Ellen said the verse she knew,
God made it comfort to poor Sue.

And those who saw that sick girl die,
Felt she'd a hope beyond the sky ;
So Ellen's text was learnt by all,
Who knew not what might them befall.

This text led some to many more,
They searched the Scriptures o'er and o'er,
And Ellen, and her mother too,
Learnt what was precious, wise, and true.

For Jesus Christ, the Truth, the Way,
The sinner's Hope, the sinner's Stay,
Opened to them the joys above,
And taught them that God's Name is Love.

CHAPTER III.

PRAYER.

O GOD the Holy Ghost, the Guide and Comforter of poor sinners, I pray thee to lead me to the foot of the cross, that I may find rest for my soul. Take of the things of Christ and show them to me. Help me to stay my mind upon the precious assurances of the Saviour, and make me feel not only that He is able, but that He is willing to save me. When Satan would put hindrances, and doubts, and fears in my way, O, Thou good Spirit, lift up Thy standard against him, and make me realise the blessedness of those whose iniquities are forgiven, that so I may rest in Jesus, and find His all-sufficiency a supply for every need. Perfect the work which I trust Thou hast begun in my heart, and enable me to adorn the doctrine of God my Saviour, by cheerful submission to the Divine will. Though debarred from public worship, O Lord, be Thou my Teacher, and show me wondrous things out of Thy law, that my very trials may be lessons for eternity. Permit me to be of use in passive service while laid aside, if it be Thy gracious will; and to God the Father, God the

Son, and Thee, O Holy Ghost, I will give the praise, now, henceforth, and for ever. 'Our Father,' &c. &c.

Scripture portions to be read.

Isa. xxvi. Ps. xxvii. Rom. viii.

The Saviour's gracious Invitation.

'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' (St. Matt. xi. 28.)

What a gracious invitation this is to the care-worn, and weary, and heavy-laden; for, in this world of unrest, there is no one who does not understand the tired feeling, which is the natural consequence of sin and sorrow. To feel that there is One who invites us to go to Him with our cares and troubles, that He may relieve us of them, is a blessing which we hardly know how to estimate, till we enjoy the promised rest.

Like the weary traveller who lays down his pack, and rests under a tree, finding refreshment beneath the shade, so the burdened sinner, who goes to Jesus with his load of sins and sorrows, finds an Almighty arm lift off the weight which presses on his weary spirit; and while the humble penitent sits under the shadow of his Beloved, he

sees that the banner over him is love, and that the handwriting against him is nailed to the cross : so he rejoices that 'the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin,' and the 'spirit of heaviness' is exchanged for the 'garment of praise.' He can now go on his way rejoicing, and instead of a lonely walk, the believer has henceforth the companionship of his Saviour on his pilgrimage ; so the road is never dark, for the Lord is his light and defence, God's Almighty arm supports over difficulties, His back carries the burden of every sorrow that is laid upon it, and having cast his care upon God, Divine wisdom and power undertake for him.

Oh, what a rest is found, when we leave our fears and anxieties, our sins and our troubles, with Him who waits to manage for us ! But too often, though we hear the Saviour's invitation, 'Come unto Me,' and desire the rest which He promises, yet we do not find the perfect repose and peace which He offers, because we refuse to trust Him with our troubles, and part with our burden.

Perhaps we take our past sins and get pardon for them, but the sin that frets we feel is part of our nature, so we say, 'No, the Lord cannot help me with that ; I shall always be the same ;' and thus we keep what is endangering our spiritual life, marring our happiness, and dishonouring our Christian profession.

Or it may be, we lay our sins on Jesus, and find *pardon* for them, and we get strength to resist the

attacks of Satan ; but we do not leave our sorrows with Him. We keep firm hold of our troubles, till, like a heavy burden, the head is sick and the heart is faint, because our strength is over-taxed. Why is this, when the Lord says, 'Come unto Me, and I will give you rest ;' 'Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee?' Is it because we cannot believe that the Almighty Jehovah is able to relieve us? Perhaps we have knelt in prayer, but the burden that was pressing was not laid down at the mercy-seat, or, if rested there for a few moments, it was again put upon our shoulder, before we allowed the Lord to take it from us. We may have said, 'Good Lord, deliver us,' but we held our trial so firmly, that we would not allow it to be loosened from our grasp.

It needs strong faith to believe that the Lord will undertake for us, and it is only 'according to our faith' that we find the promised rest. All the worry, and turmoil, and perplexities, and sins, and sorrows which distress us, are ours in their full measure, when we keep them, and complain of them, and dwell upon them, rather than take them to Jesus, who would manage for us, fight for us, order for us ; yes, He would 'ordain peace for us,' if we would only leave our concerns with Him. He understands our 'thoughts afar off,' the fears which harass our unbelief, and even the hindrances in going to the mercy-seat ; but if we go boldly, trusting in Almighty Strength, we shall find the

rest He can give, the confidence He can inspire ; and, putting our affairs under His Almighty governance, we are lightened of our load. We feel we have 'laid help upon One that is Mighty,' and in life and in death we realize that 'we shall be more than conquerors, through Him that loved us.'

Truly, this is 'the rest wherewith He causeth the weary to rest, and this is the refreshment.' Apart from the Saviour we can know nothing of it, but going to Him we find it ; for it is His gift to all who accept His invitation, 'Come unto Me.'

Dear reader, if you possess this rest your mind will be stayed upon God, because you trust in Him : you will thus be kept in 'perfect peace,' for in the time of trouble you will be hid in the Lord's pavilion, where no danger can reach. But if you know not that rest, if you are tossed about and not comforted, then go to Jesus, He will 'in no wise cast you out.' 'Ask, and ye shall receive ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.'

THE ORPHAN GIRL CHEERED ;

OR,

REST FOUND IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

(Quite True.)

A handsome girl, just twenty-one,
Whose earthly trials had begun,
Was sitting by her friend's sick-bed,
When this is what one day she said :—

‘ Busy, striving, active men,
I’ve seen them o’er and o’er again ;
There’s something real in the way,
They use religion ev’ry day.

Now that is what I call of use,
But as for me I’ve great excuse ;
For I am nearly blind, you know,
Though my black eyes belie me so.

Why I was made I cannot tell,
You say the Lord does all things well ;
But, really, I can never raise
My heart in words of thankful praise.

My greatest wish at early morn
Is, that I never had been born ;
And not till I had seen *you* ill
Did *I* think any could lie still,

And put aside all work and play,
Yet keep up spirit ev'ry day :
Though you can neither read nor write,
Do tell me what 'tis makes you bright.'

The sick one, pleased to speak her mind,
Said, ' Jesus is so good and kind ;
He is the source whence springs true peace,
He makes my happiness increase.'

' Don't talk like that,' she said, ' I pray ;
I can't believe in what you say :
The Saviour does not seem to me
So full of love as you can see.'

' Ah ! then you do not know the Lord,
Nor can you rest upon His Word :
No wonder you are low and sad,
For you have nought to make you glad.'

The sick girl paused—the other said,
' I hate myself ! would I were dead,
Than live this wretched, useless life,
With constant conflict, inward strife !'

' But do you feel prepared to die ?'
The sick one asked, and heaved a sigh.
' Prepared ? oh, no ! but I can do
Nothing, but the past review,

And wish that I had ne'er been born.'
She spoke of life with bitter scorn.
' Can God have loved me when He made
My crippled form ?' she doubting said.

' Indeed He did ; He showed it, too,
When Jesus died to ransom you :
Eternal glory He will give,
If you will now believe and live.'

The girl arose, and said with tears,
' I can't believe, I'm full of fears :
I dare not think—I never pray—
So I had better go away :

For you can never comprehend,
But you may some assistance lend,
If you will often pray for me,
And ask that I God's light may see.'

' Our blessed Saviour is the Light,
By which to see the Lord aright ;
Look up to Him and you will find
That Jesus is both good and kind.

He calls, " Come here, I'll give you rest,"
So go to Him, that's my request ;
Just kneel and say, " I come to Thee,
Lord Jesus Christ, receive poor me !"

Good-bye, I see you want to go ;
Remember, there's a cure for woe :
The good Physician can relieve,
Your case is one He will receive.'

The friends were parted on that day,
To think, to mark, to learn, to pray ;
And when they met again 'twas clear
The Saviour found was very dear.

The firm believing voice now spoke,
For God the stony heart had broke ;
The girl could say, ' I know, dear friend,
The consolations God can send.

I used to read from Nature's book,
And never to my Saviour look ;
The gifts of Nature showed me God,
But not the meaning of His rod.

I never could look up above,
And say, " My Father's name is Love ;"
I ne'er could see my Saviour's Light,
Till self was taken out of sight.

I own the love that gave me birth :
I see my duty upon earth
Is e'en to join the hosts above,
In now declaring " God is Love."

He gave His Only Son to die,
That I might live beyond the sky ;
And endless glory there enjoy,
With perfect bliss without alloy.

Oh ! wondrous love, that such as I,
May reign with Christ in Heaven on high !
May claim a kingdom and a crown,
And lay my sins and sorrows down.

For Jesus Christ now gives me rest ;
And while I lean upon His breast,
I hear Him sweetly say to me,
" My peace I henceforth give to thee."

And thus in Christ, my Lord, I find
A rest and solace for the mind ;
Pardon and peace the Saviour gives,
While hope springs up, and joy now lives.

New pleasures e'en in nature rise—
They point to love beyond the skies,
And all seems gilded with the thought,
My Saviour every blessing bought.'

'Twas thus the mourning cripple found,
And now with good she did abound ;
Till joyfully she changed this earth,
For where no sighs and griefs have birth.

Her Saviour's praise she loved below,
He was the Healer of her woe ;
For she had gone to Him for rest,
And He had loved and fully blest.

So let us all to Jesus go,
And we shall find the cure of woe
A motive power in this world's strife,
The secret of the joys of life.

For He will be the Friend and Guide
Of those who nestle by His side ;
And though of trial they partake,
The Lord will for them undertake.

Thus e'en a feeble one can raise
A humble song of grateful praise,
And echo what the angels sing,
The glory of our God and King.

CHAPTER IV.

PRAYER.

‘ALMIGHTY GOD, the Fountain of all wisdom, who knowest our necessities before we ask, and our ignorance in asking, we beseech Thee to have compassion upon our infirmities; and those things, which for our unworthiness we dare not, and for our blindness we cannot ask, vouchsafe to give us for the worthiness of Thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.’

‘O God, the strength of all them that put their trust in Thee, mercifully accept our prayers; and because through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without Thee, grant us the help of Thy grace, that in keeping Thy commandments we may please Thee, both in will and deed, through Jesus Christ our Lord.’

‘We humbly beseech Thee, O Father, mercifully to look upon our infirmities, and for the glory of Thy Name turn from us all those evils that we most righteously have deserved; and grant that in all our troubles we may put our whole trust and confidence in Thy mercy, and evermore serve Thee in holiness and pureness of living, to Thy honour

and glory : through our only Mediator and Advocate, Jesus Christ our Lord.'

'O Son of David, have mercy upon us ; mercifully forgive the sins of Thy people ; pitifully behold the sorrows of our hearts ; graciously look upon our afflictions. O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us ; both now and ever vouchsafe to hear us, O Christ. That it may please Thee to give to all Thy people increase of grace, to hear meekly Thy word, and to receive it with pure affection, and to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit. In all time of our tribulation, good Lord deliver us,' and evermore help us to give thanks to Thee, who liveth and reigneth One God, world without end. Amen.

Scripture portions to be read.

1 Sam. Ps. lv. Matt. vi.

Scripture precept.

'Is any afflicted ? Let him pray.' (Jam. v. 13.)

Prayer in Scripture words.

'Lord, teach us to pray.' (Luke, xi. 1.)

A few simple thoughts on Prayer.

Prayer is a duty, a privilege, and a comfort.

In the Communion Service we say, 'It is meet, right, and our bounden duty, to give thanks unto

Thee, holy Father, Almighty and everlasting God;’ and the Psalm that we sing at the opening of the Morning Service invites us to pray, saying, ‘Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.’

Prayer is a duty, inasmuch as it is rendering acceptable service to the King of kings, for we thus acknowledge that He is the Lord whom we serve, and therefore, to worship at His footstool is a duty that should be the first taught to children, and the one that should never be neglected in public and in private. Not to pray, is to slight the God ‘in whom we live, and move, and have our being;’ it is refusing homage due to our Almighty Ruler, and makes us like the heathen, who desire not the knowledge of God. Prayer should always be mixed with praise, for the Lord says, ‘Whoso offereth praise, He honoureth Me;’ and as we were born that we might glorify God, one of our special duties is to pray, and give thanks.

But Prayer is not only a duty, it is a privilege.

It is not merely coming to God as a Sovereign to pay Him respect, and render honour to whom honour is due; but it is the privilege of children coming to a Father, with every joy and every sorrow, with every hope, and every fear, feeling sure that He will listen to even the feeble, imperfect utterances, that are spoken in the Name of His dear Son, for ‘Him the Father heareth always.’

Prayer to be effectual must be prompted by the *heart*. It has been observed, that ‘God does not

measure prayer by its length, but by its depth.' Words that do not come from the heart have no depth; they may weary by their repetitions, but

‘Words without thought never to heaven go.’

Prayer is thought, prompted by the heart. We must wish for what we ask, we must also believe that we shall be heard; for ‘he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.’

Prayer, besides being a duty and a privilege, is a great comfort. To be able to go at all times, and make our requests known unto God, is a comfort which those know well who have felt the consolation. But prayer that brings comfort is always offered submissively, believing that God knows what is best; so that the submissive heart prays, ‘Not as I will, but as Thou wilt,’ and it is prepared to accept whatever answer God sends, feeling sure that He will cause ‘all things to work together for good to them that love Him.’ What a comfort that we may pray everywhere and at any moment! for the Lord is more ready to hear than we are to pray; and the Apostle says, ‘Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you.’

Prayer that helps is acted upon. We must not only ask for holiness, but we must strive after holy living. We must not only pray, ‘Thy will be done,’ but we must watch for opportunities of doing God’s will, and giving up our own. We must not only

pray, 'Forgive us, as we forgive,' but we must be ready to forgive and forget. Can we doubt that prayer, which acts out our desires, as if all depended on ourselves, will bring down Almighty help, to enable us to bring our efforts and wishes to good effect? Or, can we hesitate to believe that all will be right, when we have asked the Lord to undertake for us, and have left our concerns to be settled as He sees best? Assuredly, such prayer will be a great comfort. It is a casting of our burden on One Almighty to bear it, and who will carry it, if we only leave it with Him. The great drawback to our enjoying the benefit of prayer is our not making full use of it. We do not pray for small matters, so trifles worry and perplex, till they become a burden; and not till the 'whole head is sick, and the heart faint,' do we lay it before our heavenly Father. Oh, how often would fears be hushed, and temptations be withstood, and counsel be given, if only we sought the Lord, and told Him the thoughts of our heart! And would not our joys be doubled, if with thankfulness we acknowledged the Giver of all blessings, and thus hastened into His presence with praise and gratitude?

A life of prayer is a life of communion with God. It is a life that enjoys a foretaste of heaven; for what is the chief enjoyment of heaven, but dwelling with God; and what is prayer, but drawing near to God, and holding converse with

Him, opening the heart with all its desires and sorrows, its fears and joys, while the Spirit prompts our requests, and the Lord waits to be gracious; filling the hungry with good things, and giving that peace which the world knows not of?

What a weight is taken off the spirit, when the burden is cast on the Lord! What peace fills the mind, when the sin is confessed to His forgiving ear, and pardon pleaded for the Saviour's sake! What a solace is found, when the grief is told to the God of consolation! What a way out of difficulty is opened when we pray, 'Lead me in the paths of righteousness!' and though earthly crosses may not be removed, yet strength will be given to bear them, and prayer will always bring a blessing, even when a direct answer seems denied.

It has been said that praise helps prayer. When the heart is heavy, praise will often raise it; and have we not always cause for thanksgiving? Have we not reason to thank God for what He has done for us? Ought we not to thank Him for giving His only Son to die for our salvation? Ought we not to praise the blessed Saviour for interceding in our behalf? and, even in the midst of trial, may we not be thankful for a Throne of Grace, where we may obtain help? So, with prayer and thanksgiving, let us make our requests known unto God.

'The Spirit helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought:

but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.' (Rom. viii. 26.)

'If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?' (Luke, xi. 13.)

'Oh, Granny dear,' said Polly Grey,
'I wish I were like you!
You seem so happy every day;
And mother says so too.'

'Happy, indeed I am, my dear,'
And Granny spoke with joy,
As if her heart was filled with cheer,
That could not have alloy.

She was a Christian, old and blind,
Of three score years and more;
The world had been to her unkind,
But she had greater store

Than this world ever could bestow—
Her treasure was above;
Whene'er her spirits hovered low,
She thought of heavenly love.

And thus her voice would rise and sing,
She'd kiss the chastening rod,
And bring down help from Christ her King—
She'd lean upon her God.

So Polly and her neighbours all
Took note of Granny Grey ;
They said, 'Whatever may befall,
She keeps sad looks away.'

True, when she lost her dear old man,
She wept, but dried her tears,
And said, 'He's safe,' and then began
To settle others' fears.

'Not lost, he's only gone before,
To Jesus Christ above :
I soon shall follow to that shore,
Saved with Almighty Love.

Five dear children all are there,
My heart has followed too ;
And while my Saviour keeps me here,
His comforts won't be few.'

Thus the believing Granny said,
And so it proved quite true,
For though her heart had often bled,
Her peace was ever new.

No wonder that her grandchild said,
'I wish I were like you !'
For though her earthly joys were dead,
She'd blessings not a few.

So Polly all her sorrows told
Into her Granny's ear ;
She said, 'You're happy though you're old,
You never have a fear.'

‘ Ah, child !’ she sighed, ‘ I’ve many a grief,
Which you may never know ;
But Jesus gives me sure relief,
I tell Him all my woe.’

‘ How do you tell Him ?’ asked the maid.
She paused to hear reply ;
‘ I put it in my prayers,’ was said,
And Polly heaved a sigh.

‘ What makes you sigh ?’ asked Granny then,
And Polly answered low,
‘ Because, dear Granny, you don’t ken
The things that vex me so.

They are not fit to put in prayer,—
My work, and all my toil,
My pillow-lace, and many a care,
Which make my temper boil.’

‘ The Lord,’ says Granny, ‘ knows each one,
And aught that vexes you ;
Then kneel and say, “ God’s will be done,”
And God will help you through.’

‘ If I’d a trouble such as you,
Then, Granny, I would pray ;
But when my duty is to do,
I ought to work away,

And not to look upset and sad
Because our bread is dry ;
But thankful I should be, and glad,
That wages are so high.

We now may soon pay off the debt,
That keeps us far behind,
▲And makes us not the past forget,
When shop-folks were so kind.'

'That debt I know, it was my care,
I worried day and night,—
Until I put it in my prayer,
And soon that set all right.

For you got work, and that brought pay ;
Your mother's health came back ;
Your brother was employed away,
And we no bread did lack.

But I remember, Polly dear,
You've had to work quite late ;
And hard it is to keep up cheer
When tired and desolate.

Still, Polly, know there's One above,
Who counts our ev'ry hair,
Who looks down on us all with love,
And feels for ev'ry care.

He waits to listen to the sigh
Of ev'ry broken heart ;
He answers e'en the feeblest cry,
And sees the tears that start.

He'll wipe them ev'ry one away—
He always does for me ;
And soon as I begin to pray,
I feel from sorrow free.

And everything that vexes me,
That feels a weight of care,
I take it very earnestly,
And put it in my prayer.

When little Jack fell in the well,
I thought, "He's sure to die ;
Some day there'll be a tale to tell !
I wish *that* well weren't nigh."

It vexed me sore, it was my care,
Until it came to mind,
I'll carry it to God in prayer,
So care was left behind.

And little Jack was filled with fear ;
His wetting did no harm :
He never went again so near,
To cause us such alarm.

You'll hardly guess at half the things
I put into my prayers—
Whatever men or Satan brings,
To fill my heart with cares.

And you, my Polly, now shall share
The help I get myself ;
I'll put you always in my prayer,
But mind you pray yourself.

"Increase my faith," is just the prayer
That helps our unbelief ;
It takes us far away from care,
And brings us sure relief.

For faith sees Jesus ever nigh,
Pleading for us above ;
Faith points to joys beyond the sky ;
It tells us " God is Love."

So faith and prayer go hand in hand
To lift us out of woe,
And thus I firmly take my stand,
And, happy, onward go.'

By the same Author.

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